The Comic Times

No. 5
March, 1981
$2.50

MEDIA SHOWCASE

Inside:
Michael W. Kaluta

Don McGregor Speaks Out On
Spielberg, DePalma

Bible Comics by
Catherine Yronwode

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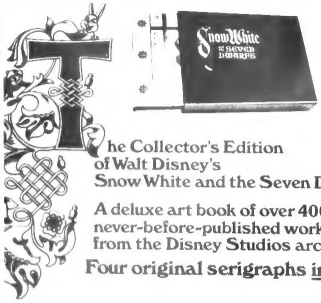
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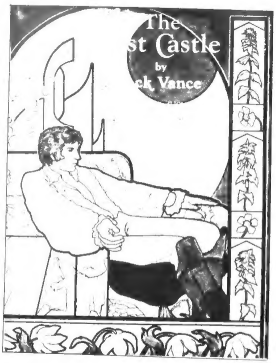

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Unfortunately we have been forced by rising printing costs to increase the cover price of our magazine to $2.50. We regret that such a move was necessary, but in order to keep publishing **The Comic Times, Media Showcase** *we had to adjust to the current runaway rate of inflation. Meanwhile we've added more pages this issue so that you're getting a little extra for your additional 50¢ investment. We will continue to strive to bring you the best possible product at the cheapest possible cost. Hopefully the economy will cooperate.*

Dennis Cieri
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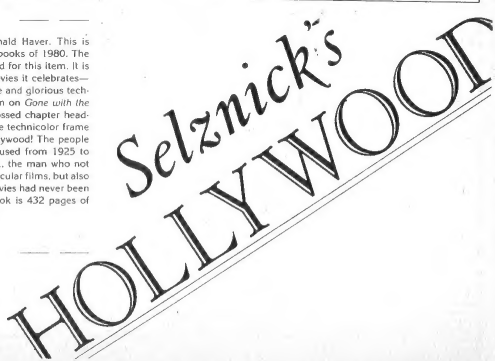

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EDITORIAL

Howard Cosell Told Me That John Lennon Was Dead

The Miami Dophins, an aging football team going nowhere, was huddling between plays. They were driving against the New England Patriots, a team with a great deal of promise, that always finds some way to lose. Suddenly, Howard Cosell told me that John Lennon was murdered about 10 miles from my home.

On November 22, 1963 my father picked me up from school in the early afternoon. It was the only time he ever walked me home from school: in all my schools years from nursery school through college. We walked home in silence. He didn't say a word. To this day, hidden away in one of the drawers of his desk, tucked under a pile of papers long discarded and rarely touched are two JFK campaign buttons. The dream is over.

I was 7 years old that day. I did not understand the feelings and thoughts and doubts and fears and hurt and frustration that boiled beneath the sad faces and clipped sentences. I couldn't see why they felt it was so important.

Two days later, when I went to Sunday Mass, the entire church was purple. In the Catholic religion purple is the color of rebirth, of coming closer to God. One comes closer to God and heaven by dying. One celebrates dying because it means that you have completed the first step toward immortal fulfillment in Heaven. On that Friday, every bell in my Church rang loud and strident after the announcement at 1:33 PM. They were "celebrating" a death.

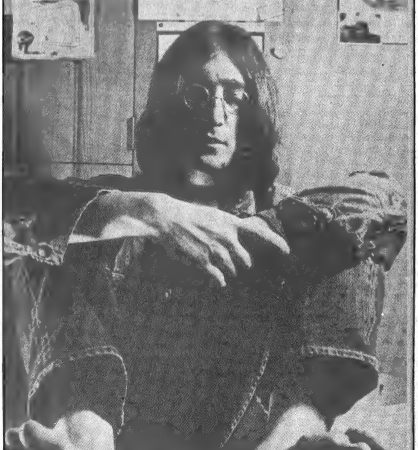
That Sunday every statue in the church was covered by a purple hanging, the priest's vestments and headresses were purple, the heavy curtains covering the windows were purple and every flower was purple. There wasn't a white rose in sight. Even the sacrament was offered from a chalice partially obscured by a purple cloth. I bet there wasn't any purple material left in the entire city that weekend. There were more people in Church that Sunday than I'd ever seen before. I guess those sad faces needed a little guidance.

The Church was an eerie place. It affected me more than the films of the shooting, more than the *Life* magazine photographs and more than the Funeral Parade. All of the purple in that Sunday Mass made an impression on me, an impression that I'll never forget.

John Lennon did not die of a drug overdose. He didn't die because he drank too much. A car or a bus or a truck driver didn't lose control and strike him. His heart did not refuse to beat any longer. He did not contract cancer or tuberculosis or any other disease.

John Lennon died because a religious freak from Hawaii read *Catcher in the Rye* and decided to play God. It's hard to feel compassionate for the son of a bitch.

I think I finally understand what Lee Harvey Oswald did to those people in that Church, that Sunday. I think I understand, at least a little bit, why my father didn't say a word when he walked me home from school that Friday.



What can you say or write or do to ease the shock? Words like "senseless", "waste", "needless" and "tragic" lose their meaning when you try to come to terms with such an act. Ironically New York City has the toughest handgun law in the country and John Lennon donated $1,000 last year to a fund to buy bullet proof vests for New York City policemen. You can't explain an irrational act, you can only accept its consequences and go on.

I was going to talk about comic books this month, but I can't work myself up to it. This is one of those times that I felt compelled to write about something else. For you see, although I never met John Lennon, I feel as though I lost a good friend, someone that I could believe in.

Enjoy the issue folks. It's a good one and I'm proud of it. Meantime I'm going to tie one on, I really need it.

See you next month,
Mark Gasper

The dream is over
What can I say?
The dream is over
Yesterday
I was the dreamweaver
But now I'm reborn
I was the walrus
But now I'm John
And so dear friends
You just have to carry on
The dream is over

—from God, 1970

© 1970 Maclen Music

LETTERS PAGE

October 16, 1980

Dear Editors,

While not a normal letter writer, I couldn't pass up a comment upon Dean Mullaney's article in THE COMIC TIMES #3.

Yes, I am aware that Steve Ditko drew a western comic for Marvel/Atlas in the '50s. Fact is, he was actively involved in at least 5 ATLAS western comics. And Carmine Infantino teamed up with Stan Lee at least 23 times between 1951 and 1953. And I'm not aware of these items because someone wrote an index or because of *APA-I* or because I read it somewhere else: I know because I bought 4,000 ATLAS comics and indexed them myself. I know it because I wanted to find out the information myself.

Dean's comment upon indexing and sharing information are rather naive in light of the current situation in fandom. Granted, the data needs to be amassed and recorded somewhere! It's imperative that the sum total of each artists or writers contribution to comics be detailed and kept for the future, but how much does each collector want to pay for the dissemination of the data?

I've been actively involved in amassing and recording data on comic artists for 15 years, and I've restricted myself lately to simply discovering and recording the information for my private use. Ten years ago, you could have purchased an entire run of, say, *Mystery Tales* (an Atlas title from 1954/57) for the price of the current cost of four issues that have Williamson art in them. And that title ran for 54 issues! I regret to say that I was the one who listed those four issues as having Williamson in them back in 1971 in an index on Williamson's work. At the time, it seemed like a great idea: Spread the word, let all the other Williamson fans know where his work could be found. But all it really accomplished was to give the dealers another reason to up the price on another four comics. I'd rather purchase the entire set and discover four beautiful stories than to spend the incredible sums to purchase those specific books that I knew to contain Williamson.

The Price Guide has made collecting a simple matter of reading. You spend some time and then you spend a whole lot more money for the privilage of knowing what you're buying. I used to send data to the *Price Guide* thinking that it was a step towards Dean's goal of recording all of this data we so desparately need in one place. But all it accomplished was to take the skill and effort out of collecting. And all of Fandom has paid the price. Not that the *Guide* is inherently evil. It is a worthwhile effort and Bob Overstreet is to be congratulated for attempting it, but we must realize that any publication of specific data that *can* be construed as increasing the value of a comic *will* be so used by the dealers out there. Even as noble an effort as *APA-I* probably gets seen by some dealer and so the information appears on his next list and, a year later, in the guide. The effort extended by one well-meaning researcher is paid for by every fan who likes that particular artist a year later.

The best motives lead inexorably to the tyranny of the dealers' price lists. Even worse, the dealers pretend eventually to have the skill and knowledge to start identifying artists on their own. Witness the recurrent listings in both price lists and Price Guide of Bernie Kirgstein's work at ACC Comics — a company he never worked for. How many Krigstein fans were disappointed after ordering from such lists? How many dealers make obscene profits simply because one of their number decided that a strip by Louis Zanksy (the artist of those Krigstein-esque stories) was actually Krigstein? And how many of us can actually recognize styles of different artists that accurately, anyway? The answer is not many. Even I have made stupid, blundering errors in identifying artists, and I'm considered pretty good at it. Mike Tiefenbacher and Jerry Sinkovec have published strips misidentified in TCR, and they are pretty good at it. Hames Ware (co-editor of the *Who's Who in American Comic Books*) and I go back on forth on potential identifications for months sometimes, trying to come to a real, valid conclusion: and Hames is damn good at it.

So whose word do you take? Do you believe that *Nature Boy* has John Buscema art in it because the *Price Guide* says so? If you can recognize Buscema's style, you might easily pay $10 to find that the *Guide* is wrong. If you like Gene Colan's work, do you want to pay the extra premium the dealers would charge if they could know for certain that a comic had his work in it? Do you, as a collector, want the thrill of discovery for youself, or are you willing to pay for someone else's knowledge (or pretended knowledge?)? My Atlas index (private use only) lists at least 300 comics with Colan art between 1949 and 1959. Wouldn't you like the thrill, Dean, of finding these yourself? Or would you rather I publish the index and let every dealer know the contents of every issue of every Atlas comic and jack up the prices according to his own conclusions of their worth?

A Ditko list is a great idea (200+ appearances at Atlas alone from 1956 to 1960), but beware that every issue in that index is likely to double in price (not in value) simply because the "by-the-book" dealer now has the data at his fingertips.

Yes, investigate, document, record, do everything in your power to accumulate data. Make sure that others know you're doing it. Give them copies of your work. Communicate with other researchers. Preserve the information. BUT DON'T PUBLISH IT if it can do harm to your fellow collector. The greatest problem Hames and I have right now in our quests for data is the simple acquisition of the material. How can new names be added to the lexicon of artists if the people who care can't even afford to acquire the necessary volume of research material? Go Cat, go Lou, go Gene, and, yes, go Dean. Do that work. But you might dig a little deeper into fandom and find some of us who have already done it for you and prefer to hide under bushel baskets for fear that the dealers might see our meager lights.

good luck and think about it.

Peace
Jim Vadeboncoeur, Jr.
3809 Laguna Ave.
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Dean Mullaney replies:

"I appreciate your reply, and concern about keeping comics within affordable reach for those who truly appreciate the medium as opposed to the all-too-large cache of "collectors" who are only in it for the money.

However, not all true appreciators of the medium have the means — financial or geographic — to search out every comic that was ever published. While I have a considerable collection, and have a number of friends willing to "open" their collections to me for research purposes, I must still pile through boxes and boxes

GUEST COMMENT

So It's Your First Big Comic Book Convention . . . . .

Upon entering the hotel, remark loudly at how large and beautiful the lobby is. This will ingratiate you on the hotel staff, which is necessary since they are the only ones who will cash your traveler's checques.

Bring a diplomatic pouch with all your receipts in it.
You will need this when you are told the hotel has lost your reservation.

Do not set your bags down. A Puerto Rican in an oversized gold dinner jacket will pick them up and demand a buck for their safe return.

While going to your room in a crowded elevator, remark how you hope this isn't the one whose cable broke last month.

Leave your room. Go down to the lobby. Try to find your room again.

Lock your key in your room.

Too bad you registered in advance. The line for pre-registration and registration is the same.

Remark that it's nice how the Convention Staff is hiring blind and deaf mutes to man the registration desk.

There are two blue oak trees on your right. Say nothing. They are with security.

Lose your convention badge.

Spend all of your money at the first table you come to.

Run to the other tables and ask how much all of the unmarked items are.

Ask for mint copies of Bat Lash. Always ask if the dealer can do a little better. Ask him to throw in a copy of Nutsy Squirrel.

Go to lunch. But never at a BrewBurger. The meat screams when you cut it. Go in groups of 17 or more. Always ask to collect for the bill. You will always come out ahead.

Go to panels in the afternoon. Ask how the Guest of Honor gets his clothes so clean and soft.

Meet professionals. Ask them how come the good people always leave comics.

At night, go to movies that you would never watch at home. Even on a lazy Sunday afternoon with a copy of PLAYBOY in one hand and a case of Piels beer in the other.

The second day always sucks. Sleep in.

Play tourist and walk around the city. Take in the sights. Go to museums and bookstores. Take a lot of pictures so you can show them to your mother's bridge club when you go home. Somehow they won't understand that you went hundreds of miles for copies of Flip The Frog.

That night at the hotel, drink soda and beer. Throw up.

Throw objects out the window. Ashtrays, phone books, and bibles work best.

Call Room Service. Call Duck Soup.

Go down to the lobby and try to cash a traveler's checque.

Vist the hotel newsstand and secure a copy of SCREW magazine. Turn to the classified section and call all the prostitutes you can to make appointments you have no intention of keeping.

Try to watch TV while 30 people in your room argue about whether or not Power Girl is a natural blonde.

Wonder aloud about whatever happened to Mike Sekowsky, Nick Cardy and Sheldon Mayer.

Bring up the old rumors about what Steve Ditko really looks like.

Do Wally Wood impersonations.

Call home to tell your parents that you are having the time of your life and that it's only a matter of time before you move here and get a job.

Sleep.

Get up early and beat your roommates to the bathroom.

It's the last day. Look for bargains in the dealers room then go out in the lobby and complain about not finding anything.

Inhale. Tru-fans don't bathe.

Go to the panels. Bring up the two-staple theory of comics. Why two and not three? Why not one?

Say Hi to Roy Thomas. I dare you.

Walk over to the National Lampoon table and ask everybody if they're Shary Flenniken.

Discuss the merits of fandom for an hour.

Follow someone around and try to summon the guts to say Hi.

Go to the artist's room. Ask them to draw characters they are unfamiliar with. Ask them to draw Wonder Woman with three nipples. Tell them they're the only reason you came all this way. They'll offer you a bong hit.

Ask for free sketches.

Say how attractive Joanna Pette is.

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NOW

MEDIA SHOWCASE

MEDIA REPORT

BY MARK GASPER

"It is a classically structured whodunit. It has broad humor, balancing wild comedy against the playing of the archetypal detective — and one of the greatest detectives of them all," comments director Clive Donner on his new project, **Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen**, the latest full-length movie inspired by the 7 Charlie Chan novels written by Earl Der Riggers in the 1920's and 1930's.

Veteran stage and screen actor Peter Ustinov was chosen to play the role made famous by non-Chinese actors Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, Roland Winters and J. Carroll Naish. "I always enjoyed the Charlie Chan mysteries," says Peter Ustinov, who is also a produced playright and a published novelist, "I remember as a young boy, urging some friends who were then experimenting with a bow and arrow to shoot arrows through my school cap. The first shot struck dead center and I delivered the line (like the Charlie Chan character), 'Ah, was expecting same.' . . . It must be the earliest dramatic line I ever invented . . .

The story (screenplay by Stan Burns and David Axelrod from an original story by Jerry Sherlock) revolves around a 30 year old revenge plot by the Dragon Queen (Angie Dickinson), a convicted murderess, against the great Charlie Chan. A series of grotesque, bizarre killings (one victim is baked to death and seven are drowned in elevators) is plaguing San Francisco and the Police Chief (Brian Keith) and his sidekick Masten (Paul Ryan) appeal to the now retired Chan to leave his beloved Hawaiin Islands and help them solve the murders. Chan along with number one grandson (Richard Hatch) set out to catch the murderer. Along the way, Chan eludes a number of attempts on his life and encounters a macabre collection of murder suspects portrayed by Roddy McDowell, Johnny Sekka, Rachel Roberts and Lee Grant.

One of the effects of the emerging ethnic pride of Chinese-Americans has been organized protests against racial stereotypes in the media like the Charlie Chan character. In fact ethnic pressure has been responsible for the withdrawal from television syndication of many of the Charlie Chan movies made in the 30's and 40's.

Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen was picketed during shooting not only because Charlie Chan is regarded as a racial sterotype, but because a Chinese actor was not chosen to portray the lead character or Chan's "half-Chinese, half-Jewish" number one grandson, Lee Chan, Jr.

But Ustinov has concentrated on the detective aspect of the character. When asked to compare Charlie Chan to Hercule Poirot (a role he will soon be playing-Christie thrillers to reach the screen) he said that, "They both have a stillness about them. Everyone else worries about what you're thinking and what conclusions you're going to reach. The detective asks, 'Where were you on the night of . . .' and goes off on his own train of thought."

© 1981 American Cinema

Roddy McDowall portrays Gillespie—an eccentric crippled butler who uses a motorized wheelchair to speed about in **Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen.**

© 1981 American Cinema

Peter Ustinov admits to a lifelong enjoyment of the Charlie Chan mysteries. But does he look Chinese enough to play the part of the master sleuth?

Despite the best efforts of Police Chief (Brian Keith) and Detective Masten (Paul Ryan), the San Francisco police are baffled by a series of bizarre murders. From **Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen.**

© 1981 Warren Communications

William Hurt fervently demands paper on which to write after one of his early isolation experiences under the influence of a rare hallucinogen. His skeptic compatriots (Bob Balaban and Charles Haid) are more concerned with Hurt's physical condition. From **Altered States**

An enormous loss resulted from the CBS broadcast of the controversial **Playing for Time** starring Vanessa Redgrave. The reason for the financial loss was that after a massive protest campaign led by prominent Jewish organizations and other political groups, "most advertisers refused to sponsor the show," explained CBS Entertainment executive Harvey Shepherd. The limited market drove the price for advertising time down to an abnormal low which led to the network's severe losses (the program scored a 26.2 rating, 41 share)

Playing for Time is the true story of one Jewish survivor of the Auschwitz Nazi Concentration Camp, written by award-winning playright and screenwriter Arthur Miller (**Death of a Salesman, All My Sons, After the Fall, The Misfits**) that was inspired by a segment on CBS' news magazine show **60 Minutes**. The controversy centered around the choice of Vanessa Redgrave (an Oscar-winning actress who financed **The Palestinians**, a purported documentary supporting the Palestine Liberation Army) to play the lead role in the drama

"There's no doubt that many people can raise the issue of insensitivity in the casting of Vanessa Redgrave," Shepherd admitted, "But CBS set a policy that we would never blacklist a person because of their political viewpoints. CBS adheres to that philosophy."

Is there a lesson to be learned from that experience? "Vanessa Redgrave proved on the screen that she was the correct choice," Shepherd said

* * *

Paddy Cheyefsky has had his screenwriter credit taken off **Altered States**. The final credits read as follows: Written for the Screen by Sidney Aaron; From the novel **Altered States** by Paddy Cheyefsky

Apparently Cheyefsky who did work on the final screenplay did not agree with Ken Russell's (the director) final conception of the film. Meanwhile the film which is being distributed by Warner Brothers is doing moderately well at the box office

* * *

The ban on the public exhibition of **John Huston**'s World War II documentary, **Let There Be Light** has been lifted after 35 years. The reason why the film was "unsuitable" for public viewing was never fully explained, but Huston and others believe that the War Dept. felt that its realistic portrayal of combat related anguish would hamper military recuitment drives. Since the film had its first public screening at the Los Angeles Museum in November, 1980 the film will be eligible for consideration in the Oscar documentary category as a 1980 release . . **Faye Dunaway** will play Joan Crawford in **Mommie Dearest. Diana Scarwald** (**Inside Moves**) will portray the author of the book, Christina Crawford, Joan's adopted daughter . . . **Michael Caine** and **Christopher Reeve** will appear in the film version of Ira Levin's **Deathtrap. Sidney Lumet** will direct . . **John Boorman**'s next film is a King Arthur-era tale entitled **Excalibur**. It will be released this Spring . . **Werner Herzog** is preparing to shoot **Fitzcarraldo** starring **Jason Roberds Jr., Mick Jagger** and **Claudia Cardinale** . . **Gore Vidal** is writing a screenplay based on **Harry Williams**' Pulitzer Prize winning biography of Huey Long . . **Barbara Streisand** will make her official directorial debut in the movie musical **Yentl**. It is rumored in industry circles that Ms. Streisand has unofficially directed most of the films that she has appeared in. Streisand has cast herself in the lead role of **Yentl**: a daughter of a rabbi who disguises herself as a boy to study the Talmud in 19th Century Europe . . . . **La Cage Aux Folles II** has been released in Europe. The sequel's cast is the same as the first film . . . **Douglas Trumbull** will direct **Brainstorm**, a contemporary action-adventure film. It is not science fiction, but does involve contemporary research that goes astray . . . **Sean Connery** has been signed for the lead role in **Wrong Is Right** which **Richard Brooks** is directing from his own script . . . **Richard Dreyfuss** will portray young Albert Einstein in a film produced by Walt Disney Productions. Also in the works from Disney is **Ray Bradbury**'s **Something Wicked This Way Comes**. **Tron** (a live action fantasy film), **The Fox and the Hound** (an animated feature that will be released next summer) and a 20 minute short about the history of Disney animation entitled **Once Upon a Mouse** . . . . The Broadway revival of **Frankenstein** folded after one performance. The production reportedly lost $2,000,000 . . . After an early slump, **Popeye** the movie, appears to be doing well commercially. **Flash Gordon** has been steadily declining . . . . . ■

Blair Brown helps William Hurt regain his humanity as he recovers from one of his "altered states"

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BOOKS

by DOUG MURRAY

COSMOS (Random House, $14.95) Dr. Carl Sagan has contributed much to both science and science fiction over the past decade. He has written scholarly tomes on astronomy and astrophysics, and he has also appeared on *The Johnny Carson Show* to expound on the possibilities of blue giraffes on Mars. Through it all, he has been both entertaining and informative.

His brainchild, the recently completed PBS series *Cosmos*, was not as good as one might expect from Sagan. Oh, the visuals were brilliant and stunning, inspiring epic images of wide-spread galaxies of stars and the detailed computer animations imaginatively conveyed the evolution of the human race from the star-stuff that spawned us all.

However, all too often, we would see lengthy soft pans of Sagan's profile superimposed over a lustrous star field while his overdubbed voice intoned paradigms of knowledge concerning those "billions and billions" of stars and worlds out there.

But, the book of *Cosmos* is a joy to behold. It is a more scholarly document of the TV series written by Sagan and beautifully illustrated by stills from the series' best moments. These stunning natural history photographs held to make the book a delightful package.

Sagan's theories on the meaning and purpose of life, while certainly not new or particularly demanding, make a pleasant background for some painless and worthwhile self-examination.

* * *

EARTHLY POWERS (Simon and Schuster $15.95) Anthony Burgess is probably best remembered as the man who introduced us to Alex the Droog and his friends back in *Clockwork Orange* in the sixties. The "old Ultra Violence" still fascinates and repels him, but his new work tries to

The main character in *Earthly Powers* is Kenneth Marchal Toomey, an 81 year old writer with an enormous insight into (and some distaste for) the world of today.

Toomey manages to escape the horrors of the first two World Wars, only to be plunged into the horrors of the current world. For example, after Toomey is mugged, he shrugs the violence off as "good in itself, like the taste of an apple; it is built into the human complex."

The narrative concerns Toomey's battle with his personal slice of hell. As a homosexual, Toomey is deprived of the rites and honors of the Church he places his faith with. But once he is denied access to the Church, he is able to perceive the hypocrisy in the Church's meaningless dogma and the perverted yearning for power by the Church's leaders.

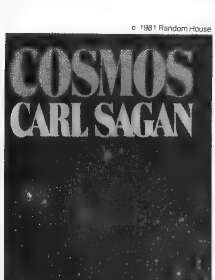
All of this sounds extremely gloomy, and *Earthly Powers* is not light entertainment. It is a book filled with discontent and a feeling of despair for "civilization."

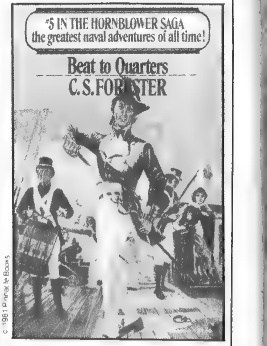
* * *

Pinnacle Books has reissued the most exciting and popular naval adventure books of all time: the Horatio Hornblower series. Hornblower (as any adventure fanatic worth his salt knows) is the penultimate naval commander who roamed the shores of France and the West Indies from 1803 through the 1850's, encountering adventure, glory, and the duties of the King's navy at every turn.

The series follows Hornblower from his earliest days at sea as a midshipman, through his commands of the sloop-at-wars *Atropos* and *Hotspur*, to his Admiralship and final meeting with Napoleon, his arch enemy.

C.S. Forester, a seaman himself in his formative years, has crafted a character Hornblower that will live for centuries in his original form and as an inspiration for the future. One example of Hornblower's influence is *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk. In the *Star Trek Writer's Guide* Gene Roddenberry describes the fledgling Captain Kirk as a "sort of Hornblower in outer space."





The 11 books in the Hornblower series are: *Midshipman Hornblower*, *Lieutenant Hornblower*, *Hornblower and the Hotspur*, *Hornblower and the Atropos*, *Beat to Quarters*, *Flying Colours*, *Commodore Hornblower*, *Ship of the Line*, *Lord Hornblower*, *Admiral Hornblower in the West Indies*, and *Hornblower at the Crisis*. Each of these books is available from Pinnacle at $2.25 each.

While I'm on the subject of seagoing adventures, Forester also wrote a little compendium to the Hornblower novels: *The Hornblower Companion* (also from Pinnacle $2.25). Inside this addendum are charts of the areas of Hornblower's activities, interspersed with anecdotes and clarifications of the author's thoughts while the books were being written.

* * *

Of interest in the same line is Time Life Corporation's *Fighting Sail*, an encyclopedic compendium of photos, paintings, charts, and a simplified history of the English navy at the time of her greatest crisis, the Napoleonic Wars. Bound in a handsome volume, this book is a little steep at $11.95, but it is an interesting bit of reading, especially after indulging in the exploits of Hornblower and his minions. I rec-

ommend the change of pace most heartily.

* * *

Seven Steps to Psychic Mind Control (Maximum Exposure Advertising, $4.95) by Doctors X, Y, and Z appears at first glance to be another of those books in the "How to Pick Up Girls" school of moneymaking. However, after one reads the introductory paragraph by one Dr. Peter Cush, Surgeon and star of Hammy Films, it is obvious that there is more to this book than meets the eye.

A closer perusal will bring to light the enclosed testimonials to the good doctors' effectiveness by one Max Renfield (he used to have a problem because of his diet of flies and spiders) and Ms. Veronica Lake (a problem of attitude).

The chapter of JAP's (Jewish American Princesses) is especially entertaining — particularly an anecdote concerning a painting by Jackson Pollack.

Seven Steps to Psychic Mind Control is highly recommended. It may not help your sex life, but it will certainly give you a little relief from worrying about it.

* * *

Conan the Liberator, the first in a new series of Conan novels by Sprague de Camp and Lin Carter came into my hands recently. As one of those who first read the Conan stories back in the early sixties when Frank Frazetta began making a name for himself by painting brooding covers of giant barbarians hacking their way through scores of enemies, I was understandably pleased to see more stories featuring the Great Cimmerian come to light. After I read the book's foreward describing how Howard's literary agent, Glenn Lord found still more unpublished Conan fragments in the author's long lost trunk, I was even more pleased. However . . .

Frankly, this book is something short of being good. The Conan of *Conan the Liberator* is not the brooding giant of old, here, he appears to be a slightly larger version of Tony Curtis in the infamous *Black Shield of Falworth* ("welcome to the castle of my fodder"). Indeed, with the amount of time that Conan spends on stage in this novel, it could just as easily have been called "Count Trocero the Conquerer."

It is extremely disconcerting when Hyborean Age warriors slip "forsooths" and "verily" into their conversations. That sort of dialogue is as anachronistic as it would be to have King Arthur draw his Colt .45 and ride into battle on a Yamaha.

Perhaps the story fragments that have recently surfaced were written by Howard, but were intended to feature on of his Howard Pyle-like medieval characters. Regardless, this just ain't Conan folks, and no amount of ballyhoo or reworking will make him Conan.

* * *

Arthur C. Clarke's *The Fountains of Paradise* is a fitting addition to the work of an old favorite. Ever the innovator, this time Clarke postulates the construction of an elevator from the surface of the earth to a satellite in synchronous orbit, some 22 miles above the equator. Sound insane? Well, apparently it's possible to do this right now! We have the technology, perhaps we just lack the imagination.

But imagination is one thing that Clarke has in abundance. His concept of the elevator is merely the basis of a story of man's first contact with alien life and the effect of that contact on the precarious hold of religion on the minds of humanity.

Read *Fountains of Paradise*, it will reward you on many levels.

* * *

After the many books about show business families that have appeared in recent years (*Mommie Dearest* is probably the most famous) it's nice to read a book that isn't written as a personal vendetta against some famous personality. In *Growing Up with Chico* (Prentice-Hall $9.95) Maxine Marx gives us an inside look at both sides of fame.

As the daughter of Chico Marx, one would think that Maxine's childhood would have been more fun than a barrel of monkeys, or Animal Crackers anyway. Unfortunately, reality isn't like that.

Her father was a womanizer, a gambler, and very self-destructive. Despite these all too real vices, Chico was a warm and delightful father and his daughter obviously adored him.

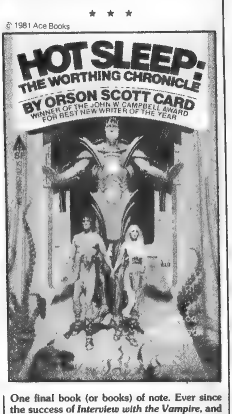
Uncle Groucho was the darker side of fame. According to this book, he was a man who lived on the anger and hostility of his humour, who was unable to divorce that persona from his private life. A bit of an enigma, he always had the ability to make young Maxine laugh, even after he had brought her to the verge of tears.

Maxine Marx has shed some light on the family life of the most famous of the movie clowns. If that family life was not fun and laughs, at least there was a deep degree of humaness and caring. An interesting look at an interesting group of men.

* * *

Hot Sleep, the Worthing Chronicles, (Ace, $2.25) is a new work by an author I had never heard of before (Orson Scott Card), and I must admit to being taken somewhat by surprise. The cover illo, (a man in a space suit letting an Adam and Eve sort out of a rocket) reminds me of an old 40's pulp illustration and the first few pages of the book read like a reprise of A.F. Van Vogt's classic, *Slan*. However, in the third chapter values begin to shift and our young hero, Jason becomes something more than the one-dimensional "man with the power" of pulp fiction. The book is really an examination of moral and spiritual values. This is built into the fabric of an essentially entertaining high adventure story. As an early venture by a young writer, this is somewhat of a pleasant surprise. Buy it, perhaps we can induce the publisher to issue more of the same.

* * *


© 1981 Ace Books
HOT SLEEP:
THE WORTHING CHRONICLE
BY ORSON SCOTT CARD
WINNER OF THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL AWARD FOR BEST NEW WRITER OF THE YEAR

One final book (or books) of note. Ever since the success of *Interview with the Vampire*, and the Broadway hit *Dracula*, books with vampiric motifs have flourished. One of the leading essayists of this sub-genre is Chelsey Quinn Yarborough who has crafted a series of novels about a Vampire (Count Saint Germaine) which started out as stylish pieces in this formerly unplumbed vein (sorry).

Unfortunately, with the success of *Hotel Transylvania*, the St. Germaine stories have taken a turn for the worst and now he is a vampire in the true Byronic tradition, pining for his lost loves and pulling his heated mistresses into his fervid grasp. In short, he has become the hero of a series of Gothic Romances, a term hated and feared by those of us who do not read them. Anyway, the latest book in this group is called *Blood Games*. It concerns the good Count's activities during the Roman Empire. Buy it or avoid it depending on your feelings toward Gothicism. I will say no more.

NOTHING'S GONNA CHANGE MY WORLD

When I heard that John Lennon died I was sitting on my bed writing. The *Tonight Show* was on the television but I wasn't paying much attention. At about 11:45 pm, EST, Monday, December 8, one of the first announcements went over the air. Televised death announcements always place a title before the name ("President" Kennedy, "Senator" Kennedy, "civil rights leader" Martin Luther King), this time it was "former Beatle."

The announcer seemed to hold his breath, or pause for dramatic effect, and I found myself impatient for the remainder of a message I knew I dreaded. The tone in his voice indicated that the word "dead" would surely follow.

Some people have compared this tragedy with the Kennedy assassination and I think I agree. For those people who felt that a dream and its prime mover had been destroyed, it was the end of *Camelot*. For me something else has ended. Not any magical notion of the 60's: I was too young to be a participant in that era. But what I took from those years was the work of John Lennon and the Beatles. I carried that work from 1964 (*Meet the Beatles*) into the 70's where I came to a greater understanding and appreciation of it. I still have it today and although I'll have it all my life something's gone from it. I never expected the band to reunite. But I felt their influence just by knowing that the four of them were around somewhere: especially John, my idol since age ten. Now he's gone, and the world is poorer for it.

For me, John Lennon was the representative of the Beatles' most enduring quality, their originality. They were different from much of the world, and he was alwyas just a little different from his partners. At the start he was the "married" one. It fit with his image as the leader, which as a child in Catholic school I was trained to respect. Later on he'd be the first "divorced" one, beginning to carrry on in bed with his new wife Yoko Ono, in front of the world's TV cameras. This "bed-in" for peace firmly separated Lennon from the rest of the Beatles as a personality. The group lasted a while longer but their "image" was irrevocably lost.

This was the "imaged" that I had learned at my most impressionable. They were four very talented, respectable boys, who were a little headstrong but not rebellious. *A Hard Day's Night* showed them smoking and dancing, but one could forgive such vices. *Help* was free of such "unhealthy" scenes, and since I actually saw this movie before *A Hard Day's Night* I almost did believe the boys lived in one big house with four doors (but apparently not more than one room).

Within this respectability (something of a trap, Lennon would later muse, since "it wasn't us") John was the madcap relief. The bizarre didn't faze him — Ringo mailing his hand, or being pulled by magnets to the top of an elevator. Relatively commonplace press conferences, on the other hand, were arenas for prevarication and storytelling. The other Beatles followed John's lead in this, misidentifying themselves and giving sarcastic answers to interviewers.

After the breakup Lennon's antics continued on a larger, far more unconventional scale. I was angry with him. Like many I didn't like Yoko and I didn't like the aggressive, new music. But through all his experimentation John was remaining true to a vision. His noncon-

formity, from madcap loony to angry rebel, always pointed out that the world at large was not all powerful. It could imprison you, fix you to certain patterns of behavior, stifle your free will. Or it couldn't, if you mocked it, fought it, or best of all found your own way to live.

* * *

Among the Beatles songs distinctly Lennon in feel are *You Can't Do That*, *If I Fell*, *I'm A Loser*, *Help*, *Norwegian Wood*, *In My Life*, *Strawberry Fields Forever* and *A Day In The Life*. His artistic life paralleled his personal. Emotional states, private experimentation, and changes in life style are all acknowledged in the material. The McCartney influence on Lennon tempered an outspoken streak. In the recently published *Playboy* interview John said that he was the questioning pessimist to Paul's bouyant optimist. Thus many of the songs he dominated stressed caution and reality over emotion and romanticism, though the latter influences were nearly always present in some degree. So "*life is very short, and there's no time for fussing and fighting my friend*," but still, "*We can work it out*." And the "Nowhere Man" is given the assurance not to worry till *Somebody else lends (him) a hand*.

In his solo work the baldness of John's lifestyle was presented without any such temperance. But the sensibility in all his work remained change. Prior to 1968 his music told the story of a man coming of age, coming to terms with his artistry, and dealing with his often volatile emotional states. For a good while he could be angry very convincingly (*You Can't Do That*, *Run For Your Life*). But he was growing more and more introspective (*I'm A Loser* through *Help* to *Strawberry Fields Forever*). He loved his lost past (*In My Life*) but celebrated the present ("*I love you more*"). But as the changes continued it was obvious that he was still seeking something. Maybe it would come in the future.

In 1968 Lennon wrote *Across The Universe*. The song and its refrain, "*Nothing's gonna change my world*," could be his epitaph. When he died he was finally content with his life. Apparently he had changed enough. *Across The Universe* is a hopeful flash-forward. Lennon's solo career would soon begin, and he'd be shouting for change as usual. He'd sing of changes needed immediately (*Woman Is The Nigger Of The World*), of change that should be (*Power To The People*) and of change that perhaps could be (*Imagine*). At some point, perhaps just prior to his temporary retirement, or (as he alluded) during it, he changed for what he was certain was the final time. His last work tells about it.

Still, in many ways *Across The Universe* is a superior testament to his talent. Nearly released as a single (*Lady Magonna* was released instead), it was donated to the World Wildlife Fund. The version on *Let It Be* was remixed by Phil Spector. The original appears on *Beatles Rarities*, released earlier this year by Capitol. Leading off with bird sound effects, the original makes an effective ecological anthem, opposing man's relentless destruction of nature. The children singing the chorus impose a sense of nature's very continuity. A verse like.

Sounds of laughter, shades of life are ringing through my open ears, inciting and inviting me

conjures up images of some kind of Eden, where life by virtue of its existence, is beautiful. Spector's lush remix which drops background voices and adds strings, leaves the earth and does indeed go sweeping "*Across The Universe*." The singer's

thoughts meander like a restless wind inside a letter box, they tumble blindly as they make their way across the universe

as he seems to have left his body behind. The "sounds" and "shades" take on more spiritual meaning in this version.

Comparing the two versions is a virtual juxtaposing of the familiar with the transcendent. Doing this one learns the scope of an artist whose work can be so permutated. Combining grandeur with an understanding of the ordinary effuses the work of many great artists. A great artist can deal with the universal in a simple language. John Lennon was such an artist.

His life spanned working class England. He became an intregral part of a "pop scene" which exposed him to the turbulent social events and experiments of the 60's from drugs to est to primal scream therapy. Finally he found his answer in something that he had always known, but had never possessed. In *Playboy* he talked about a childhood never fully realized, a first experience as a parent lost to work, and the long sought after chance that he made the most of in the last five years of his life.

John's earliest message was music. For over a decade before his death he had preached peace. After *Give Peace A Chance* he had combined the two messages successfully. When he added a third element, family, he seemed to have achieved a mix that satisfied him. He had completed his private world at last. If it was a world less radical than he'd wished for in *Imagine*, his optimism was certainly more real than idealistic. He obviously still held to the sentiment he'd once expressed:

. . . I hope someday you'll join us,
and the world will be as one.

But he had realized his own dream so well that he didn't have to imagine so much anymore. Certainly he could still

. . . Imagine all the people,
Living life in Peace

but he had found his own peace at last.

* * *

In light of his death some tragic ironies accompany an examination of the album jacket of Lennon's final complete work, *Double Fantasy* (Geffen). On the back is a photo of him and Yoko standing before the Dakota, the site where he was eventually murdered. The Dakota was the home that he loved for the last five years. Below the picture is a message thanking "the people, known and unknown, who helped us stay in America, without whom this album would not have been made." In grief one could add, "and without whom you'd still be alive." But it would be unfair to Lennon's memory to maintain such an attitude and avoid this record. It's full of songs in which he celebrates his life, and so should all of his fans.

The single *(Just Like) Starting Over* begins side one with a declaration of that very idea: *Our life together is so precious together.*" This song, the richest on record, first states its major theme while at the same time outlining Lennon's philosophy for the 1980's which he had already begun to discuss in interviews.

We have grown— we have grown
Although our love is still special
Let's take a chance and fly away
somewhere Alone

John acknowledged that the 70's had been the "me decade" as many had called it. He had taken time for himself then, but he hoped that the 80's would be a time to rejoin the world on your own terms, using what you had learned about yourself to successfully interrelate with other people.

So once again John Lennon set out to talk to the world with his music. He was preaching something different this time. Instead of instructing he was giving examples of what he thought things should be like.

However far we travel
Wherever we may roam
The center of the circle
Will always be our home

He answered the questions about his years of non-public life.

People say I'm lazy dreaming my life away
Well they give me all kinds of advice designed to enlighten me
When I tell them I'm doing fine watching shadows on the wall
Don't you miss the big time boy you're no longer on the ball?

Generally he sang of the everyday life that had become to mean so much to him: the love of his wife (*Woman* and *Dear Yoko*) and the pleasures of house-husbandry (*Cleanup Time*).

Certainly the full depth of his talent is not exhibited on this album. The melodies are at times undistinguished. (*Just Like*) *Starting over* with its 50's doo-wap styling is certainly the most engaging. *Dear Yoko* had a definite Buddy Holly feel. The songs are really carried by John's vocals, fervent or wistful or wry by turns. Lyrics are relatively simple; to fit the message. In fact the strenth of many of the songs is that very message. John's lyric for the song to his son Sean *Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)* comes close to cliche at one point.

Before you go to sleep
Say a little prayer
Every day in every way
Getting better and better

but the song works because of John's gentle vocal and the tone of the song, a father telling his son good night. And because some of the words do reflect the legendary Lennon wit.

Before you cross the street
Take my hand
Life is what happens to you
While you're busy
making other plans

This may also be the album's most touching song, because it acknowledges Lennon's half-decade of child care and the hopes he has of seeing his child grow; yet another dream that was stolen from him.

Lennon's only exception to this theme is a song called *I'm Losing You*, a regulation lover's lament followed by an answering song from Yoko, *I'm Moving On*, with virtually the same tune but full of angry responses to the man's pleas:

You knew you scored me for life
Don't stick your fingers in my pie
You know I'll see through your jive.

Which leads to a perusal of Yoko's songs. As a person who bought the *Instant Karma* single but played *Who Has Seen The Wind* only once (almost), I now must withdraw my assertion that she is no musician. Compared to Linda McCartney Yoko Ono is a . . .well, a Lennon. The quality of her pieces here varies widely, but at her best she demonstrates a "New Wave" panache that apparently predated new wave. *Kiss Kiss Kiss* and *Give Me Something* are uncannily Blondieish, resembling the group's early more sinuous, pre-success era. Her voice cuts repeatedly through a relentless rhythm. These two songs may be the most exciting on the entire album.

However, she does not match her late husband's consistency, choosing to experiment rather overmuch. Sentiment is not her forte, and *Beautiful Boys* (to John and Sean) at first comes off smarmy and then pretentious, as she goes off to expatiate upon the nature of manhood. A truly coherent "narrative" lyric is beyond her—the free-associative staccato words of the new wave songs are more effective since they make little sense but sound so right. A song called *I'm Your Angel* tries for charm and a fairy tale quality and it's quite engaging exept for a too-cute "tra-la-la" refrain.

A couple of times Yoko tries to respond to John's songs with the same kind of material. *Every Man Has A Woman Who Loves Him* and *Hard Times Are Over* which end the album

comprise something of an ironic epilogue. The woman who'll love her man in *"rain or shine or life or death"* regrettably will have to do the last too soon. And the *"hard time"* are just beginning for Yoko and for all of us.

NOTES

Ironically, **John Lennon** learned that his new album had gone gold just before his death . . . 100,000 people attended the Lennon vigil in Central Park. Elsewhere, as you read this **Linda Ronstadt** and **Rex Smith** should be on Broadway in **The Pirates Of Penzance** . . . After some eight years of exile in New England, *Jonathan Richman* had begun touring once more . . . Once he was **Herman**, head **Hermit**, now **Peter Noone** is leader of English new wave band the **Tremblers**. Their appearance on **Midnight Special** showed a still-boyish Noone pursuing a rock-and-roll style diametrically opposed to the Hermits' British Music Hall bag . . . Queens punks **The Ramones** have come to the attention of entertainment magnate **Robert Stigwood**. Can he turn "I Wanna Be Sedated" into another "Stayin' Alive"? . . . Three sisters from New Hampshire named Wiggin once made up a band called the **Shaggs**. Their 1969 album called **Philosophy of the World** was recently re-released by Rounder. 'Unique' is a cautious evaluation of the music. "Amiable cacophony", said **Rolling Stone**. ■

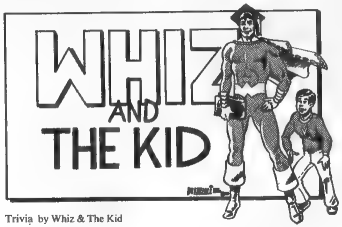
Recommended:

JACK GREEN, *HUMANESQUE*

RCA: ELLEN SHIPLEY, *BREAKING THROUGH THE ICE AGE*

A&M: *THE IDOLMAKER*, SOUNDTRACK; *DEAN CONN THE LEGEND OF JESSE JAMES*, VARIOUS ARTISTS; *SECTOR 27: UP FRONT*, THE FLESHTONES (IRS); *PARADISE THEATRE*, STYX; *ATLANTIC STARR: LESLIE, KELLY & JOHN FORD COLEY: FEELIN' ALL RIGHT*, NEW RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE; *BLUSH*, LANI HALL; *WILD EYED SOUTHERN BOYS*: 38 SPECIAL; *PERFECT FIT*, JERRY KNIGHT; *NAZARETH: ALI THOMSON*;

Misc.: *THE DOORS' GREATEST HITS* (Elektra); *DREAM LOVERS*, TANYA TUCKER (MCA); *VIENNA*, ULTRAVOX (Chrysalis); *LOVE LIVES FOREVER*, MINNIE RIPPERTON (Capitol); *BALLROOM*, SEA LEVEL (Arista); CAREFUL, THE MOTELS (Capitol); *24 CARROTS*, AL STEWART & SHOT IN THE DARK (Arista); *COMMON ONE*, VAN MORRISON (Warner Bros.); *BEATIN' THE ODDS*, MOLLY HATCHETT (Epic); *A*, JETHRO TULL (Chrysalis); *SHADOWS AND LIGHT*, JONI MITCHELL (Asylum); *ANYTIME, ANYPLACE, ANYWHERE*, ROSSINGTON COLLINS BAND (MCA); *CLUES*, ROBERT PALMER (Island); MEGA-SHEBANG, ANDY FAIRWEATHER LOW (Warner Bros.); *A MUSICAL AFFAIR*, ASHFORD AND SIMPSON (Warner Bros.); *LOVE APPROACH*, TIM BROWN (Arista/GRP). ■



Trivia by Whiz & The Kid

Illustration by Edward Meinz

Yo ho ho and a bottle of rum, 16 men on a dead man's chest!

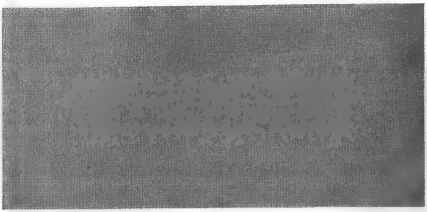
Ahoy there, me hearties! It's trivia time again. But leave all your concerns high and dry, and sail with us on the S.S. Trivia far over the bounding main..But we are not alone. There are others who are travelling over the seven seas.

First there will be ten descriptions and you must identify the name of the ship being talked about. Then there will be a list of ten ships. It's up to you swabs to come up with who is sailing on each.

So hoist the jib and batten down the hatches! Anchors aweigh!

1. The ship from which Lemuel Gulliver is washed ashore to Lilliput.
2. This ship was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland in 1915 and sank in 18 minutes.
3. Lord and Lady Greystoke sailed with their son on this ship until the were cast onto the African shore.
4. King Kong never forgave Robert Armstrong for his poor sailing accomodations aboard this ship.
5. This is the ship that Harvey Orwell has been working on for years, even though he hopes to never finish it.
6. This ship was hit by a tidal wave one New Year's Eve and turned upside down in a book by Paul Gallico.
7. Jason and the Argonauts' ship when they searched for the Golden Fleece.
8. This was the ship on which Napoleon surrendered on July 15, 1815, after Waterloo.
9. Phineas Fogg began his 80 day journey by playing whist aboard this ship.
10. Horatio Hornblower served as a Lieutenant on this ship.
11. The Alice May
12. The Demeter
13. The Dejah Thoris
14. The Leakin' Lena
15. The Gloria Scott
16. The Curlew
17. The Rita
18. The Pequod
19. The Southern Cross
20. The Walrus

Answers on page 92



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D. Men's sizes small, medium, large and extra large _____ #26202—$39.95

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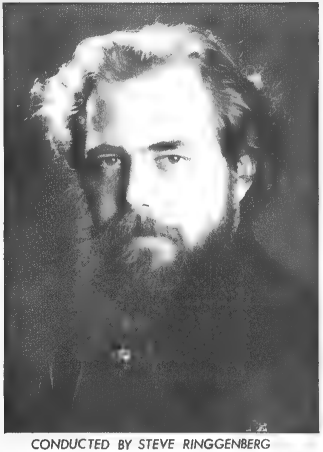


AN INTERVIEW WITH MIKE KALUTA

"THE REWARD IS IN THE DOING... ART IS VERY LONELY."

CONDUCTED BY STEVE RINGGENBERG

Backstage at the Network Theater it is half an hour until curtain. The cast of **Starstruck** *milts around in the traditional pre-show frenzy, donning flamboyant costumes, applying bizarre makeup, and readying the assortment of futuristic props and weapons used in the show. One isolated corner of the crowded dressing room is strangely calm. There* **Starstruck***'s costume designer completes some last minute repairs on a damaged costume piece. The tall, fierce-looking bearded man who sits hunched over a grey foam rubber space helmet is Michael William Kaluta, comic artist, illustrator and theatrical designer. As pandemonium reigns around him, Kaluta, refusing to be hurried, carefully affixes an elaborate crest to the side of the helmet, whose shape is curiously suggestive of an Art Deco Christmas ornament. Taking a drag on the cigarette which dangles from the corner of his mouth, Kaluta critically eyes his handiwork. He nods his approval silently, the helmet is ready to go on.*

Later, when the show is underway, and the atmosphere in the dressing room is less chaotic, Kaluta settles back on a broken-down couch to smoke another cigarette and answer a fresh round of questions. His full, dark beard adds to the suggestion of brooding mysticism hovering around him, but as we talk, I become aware of his eyes and the whole aspect of his face seems different. Kaluta has the eyes of a poet, full of wry humor, intense curiousity, and other, wilder, less identifiable emotions. When he laughs, which is often, his laughter is deep and rich as it comes rumbling up from his chest.

To anyone who regards comic art as a native American art form worthy of serious study, the name Michael Kaluta commands considerable respect. In the early 70's Kaluta, along with his friends Jeff Jones, Berni Wrightson and Barry Windsor-Smith, were in part responsible for the revitalization of the artistically moribund (with few exceptions) comics medium.

Before working in color comics, Kaluta served his apprenticeship on **Web of Horror***, a short lived black and white magazine which also contained the work of Jones and Wrightson, among others. In the late 60's and early 70's Kaluta also contributed to a great many fanzines:* **Spa Fon**, **Graphic Showcase**, **Heritage**, *and* **Reality** *among others. One of the best remembered fanzines that Kaluta worked on was* **Abyss***, a magazine produced by Kaluta, Jones, Wrightson and Bruce Jones. It contained a story written and drawn by each of them.*

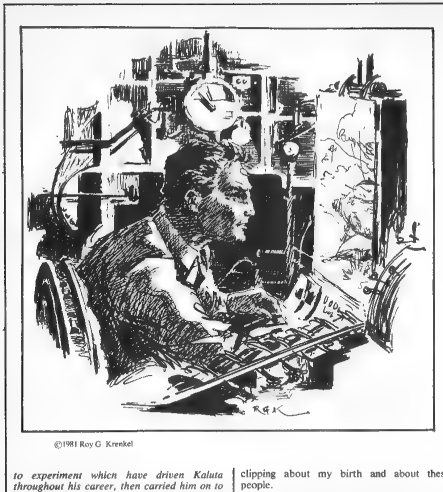
Kaluta's first major assignment in comics was an instant classic, an extraordinarily faithful adaptation of Edgar Rice Burroughs' **Carson Of Venus***. His love of the material was obvious in the wealth of detail he crammed into each panel, in the way he evoked memories of the work of Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta, and in the epic sweep and tangible sense of alienness he brought to each page.*

His next strip was equally memorable, although it was light years away from epic fantasy. The Shadow had been adapted to comics many times before, but Kaluta's is perhaps the definative interpretation, for he brought to it the qualities that distinguished his earlier work: careful attention to details of place and setting, a strong sense of atmosphere, and a supurbly cinematic story-telling style. Gone was the sweep of epic, supplanted by an aura of dark, mysterious evil. It's a tribute to Kaluta's versatility that he could draw such widely divergent subjects and still remain faithful to the spirit of each.

Despite his success as a comic artist, Kaluta left comics in the mid-70's to pursue his first love: illustration. Since then, he has cemented his reputation as an illustrator par excellence by illustrating two volumes of Robert E. Howard's swashbuckling pulp fiction, as well as creating a series of well received fantasy prints and several portfolios. And when Kaluta tackled the task of illustrating Dante's **Inferno***, the floodgates of his prolific imagination were thrown wide open. However, the* **Inferno** *portfolio initially received a rather lukewarm response from fans of his comic book work; perhaps they weren't yet ready for an attempt at an artistic depth and a maturity of vision.*

In 1976, after a year or two of working by himself, Kaluta allowed Wrightson, Jones and Winsor-Smith to persuade him to join them in a lower west side loft, and The Studio was born. Four of comics' most talented and innovative artists were now sharing a studio, sharing their ideas and shaping each other's talents. The creative energies produced there were intense, but The Studio only lasted for three years. After the publication of **The Studio** *book, the four artists went their separate ways.*

The same restless curiousity and willingness



©1981 Roy G. Krenkel

to experiment which have driven Kaluta throughout his career, then carried him on to his next venture: that of theatrical designer for **Starstruck**, *a feminist science fiction comedy. Following a chance meeting with two of* **Starstruck***'s creators, Elaine and Susan Lee, Kaluta saw a play produced by their theater company, Wild Hair Productions and agreed to work on* **Starstruck**. *Initially Kaluta simply offered to draw the poster for the play. But, after reading the script, he was so taken with it that he wanted to design the costumes and sets. It's only fair to mention that during their first meeting at a restaurant in Kaluta's neighborhood, the Lee sisters suspected the purity of Kaluta's motives in offering his services. As Susan Lee recalled: "I figured he was probably on the make and was probably a taxicab driver who drew in his spare time." Kaluta's involvement with the play will continue when the play will be revived for an extended Off-Broadway run. "*

This interview was recorded over a two week period in May, 1980 and could not have taken place without the kind of cooperation of Michael Kaluta, Charles Vess and the cast and crew of **Starstruck**.

SR: *Mike, before I ask you about anything else, how about a little background?*

KALUTA: I was born in Guatamala City, Guatamala in 1947. My parents were in the service and they were stationed in the Panama (Canal) Zone. Incidentally, my godparents, the woman is a flamenco dancer and my godfather is a bullfighter, which I think is pretty romantic. I only found out about it when I was 14 or 15. I found an old newspaper clipping about my birth and about these people.

SR: *Did coming from a service family give you a feeling of rootlessness as a child?*

KALUTA: Very much so.

SR: *Did you compensate for this by retreating into a fantasy world?*

KALUTA: Not so much as, say, Vaughn Bode or some other people that I've met where they've actually created a real world. But yeah, I spent more time checking out what was around me than socializing and running around with the same gang, because I didn't have a gang. I'd be the new guy on the block every year.

SR: *Do you think you were an especially imaginative child?*

KALUTA: I don't know, I think all children are imaginative. I just cared enough that during the cutoff point, whenever kids stop being imaginative, I didn't.

SR: *How far did you go in college?*

KALUTA: I got through the second year of college.

SR: *Were you studying art?*

KALUTA: I was studying fine art in Richmond, Virginia at Virginia Commonwealth University.

SR: *Did you want to be an illustrator?*

KALUTA: Yes, I wanted to draw comics, but I really wanted to just do pictures like Roy Krenkel did and Frank Frazetta did. That came about in the second year of high school when Ace books started coming out with their covers and the little drawings on the fly leaf. That's what turned me from drawing pictures of wharves and steamboats, to drawing guys in loinclothes in weird landscapes jumping each other with knives and stuff like that.

SR: *When did you do your first fanzine work? Who was it for?*

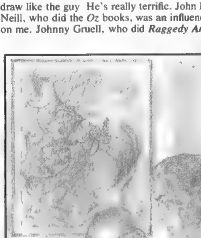
KALUTA: My first fanzine work was for *Spa Fon* magazine "The Hole in Space" is what it was, a bunch of crazy Mars-type drawings. And, at the same time, I got into fanzines with Tom Long via *Graphic Showcase*. But, *Spa Fon* came out just about two weeks before the other one did, so you could say *Spa Fon* was the first one to come out.

SR: *What was your first pro work?*

KALUTA: My first pro work was for Charlton comics, it was a thing called The Great Battles of History: Shiraz, The War of the Roses or something. And they lost the job when it was in pencils. They gave me a romance to see if I could do romance. They were always looking for romance artists. I blew that. They gave me a western. I blew that even worse. So all of a sudden, they found Shiraz, as if it hadn't been lost at all, and I finished that up. It came out third, but it was the first thing I did.

SR: *Who do you think are the major influences on your work? Who are your heroes?*

KALUTA: My heroes? God, there's a long list. First off, a major influence is Roy Krenkel because of *Chessmen of Mars*, *The Mastermind of Mars*, that kind of stuff just turned me right on. Then of course, Frazetta followed right on his heels when he started signing his name to some of the things. A few of the things that look like Krenkel did 'em, Frazetta did. So those guys were my real heroes. At the same time, I get into Aubrey Beardsley and Alphonse Mucha. Will Eisner, Gustav Klimt. Jesse Cole's an influence, but I can't draw like the guy. He's really terrific. John R. Neill, who did the *Oz* books, was an influence on me. Johnny Gruell, who did *Raggedy Ann*



© 1981 Michael Kaluta

A pencil rough of the Kaluta painting on our front cover prepared before he began painting

and Andy. He also did some Fairy-tale fantasy books, one of which was a very big influence on me, called, *the Magical Land of Noon*, which I haven't seen since 1965, but still influences me. All my fairy-tale houses are straight out of Johnny Gruell.

SR: *Do you see yourself doing any kind of children's illustrations in the future?*

KALUTA: I've seen myself doing it in the past, but never getting very far with it. It's a hard row to hoe. They don't like to let new people in, and they've had a wall against doing anything that smacked of it being turn-of-the-century. I like doing more Edmund Dulac, Arthur Rackham kind of things when I'm doing a children's book and apparently they're dead set against that. Well, I went and put it in poster form instead.

SR: *How did it come about that you helped Krenkel on* The Sowers of The Thunder *book?*

KALUTA: He called me up and said: "Geeze, Mike, I need some help with this. I need the shadows dropped. They've been calling me, hounding me for these things. I should have had it done two years ago. Can I come over?" I said, Sure! So, he came over and he had all his drawings with tracing paper over them. He said: "Can you drop some shadows in there for me?" I said, Sure!

SR: *Was it a thrill for you to work with Krenkel?*

KALUTA: Oh, yeah. I had known him for years. I met him the same day that we met Frazetta in '67. . .He's got some terrific drawings, they're just, like sketches and stuff. When he's working on a problem, what he likes to do is get a problem in his mind, think about it for a number of years and work it out in little bitty sketches until he has a massive pile of little bitty sketches that deal with the thing and one real finished *[Piece]*.

SR: *You also worked with Krenkel on some pulp illustrations for the Lin Carter paperback, how did that happen?*

KALUTA: Well, Roy called me up and said: "I can't do this. I'm just blanked out." Came over with almost finished drawings and told me to do them. There was one drawing he hadn't done, so I based all my drawings on his drawings. Did them really tiny, and on one he hadn't even done, I signed both our names because, hell it was his style anyway.

SR: *Are you influenced much by films?*

KALUTA: Yeah, Very much.

SR: *Tell me some of your favorite films.*

Kaluta: This isn't necessarily from one to ten in a descending order, it's just what's on my mind first. What's on my mind first is, *Walkabout*, which has nothing to do with anything I've probably ever drawn, but it's a magnificent film. . . .There's *Citizen Kane*, *The 39 Steps*, all those things of that genre, the film noir. The Thin Man stuff, it's so much fun to watch. *Beauty And The Beast* of course, by Cocteau. It's absolutely. . .just a magical film done with very little budget. . . .*King Kong* and *Mighty Joe Young*. *King Kong*, especially the New York scenes, had a lot to do with the Shadow.

SR: *Were you influenced at all by old radio shows?*

KALUTA: Not really, no, except for Guy Lombardo. When I was a kid, my mother listened to Guy Lombardo when she'd do the ironing.

SR: *You haven't encountered any old Shadow shows on records?*

KALUTA: Oh, I've encountered them, and listened, but I didn't go for that Shadow as much as the one in the pulps. The one in the pulps was a hell of a lot more mysterious. He didn't pal around with Margo Lane, he just used her. The thing is implied in the books is that Margo's job was to go fuck somebody and find out all the information she could. That was what she was doing and it was never, ever implied on the radio show, as far as I know, but I never listened to all of them.

SR: *How about music? Do yo listen to music when you draw?*

KALUTA: Very rarely, lately. I used to listen to it a lot more in college. I'd get stoned, put the music on and draw science-fiction. That was the normal thing to do. But, now, I find, in the actual conceiving of a drawing, my concentration would be taken away if I'm listening to anything.

SR: *Were you influenced by E.C. comics at all?*

KALUTA: I was influenced as a kid. I mean, I still have perfect dramatic nightmares based on two or three of the stories from that and from *Forbidden Worlds*.

SR: *Do you think you were influenced more by science-fiction, fantasy, or . . .?*

KALUTA: I was influenced by Edgar Rice Burroughs, that's it. Everybody else took a back seat to that. I mean there were futher influences, but it was reading Burroughs at that time when my mind could really flesh it out that they got my mind to be able to do whatever it does when I'm drawing or visualizing something.

SR: *So you see things in terms of Burroughs?*

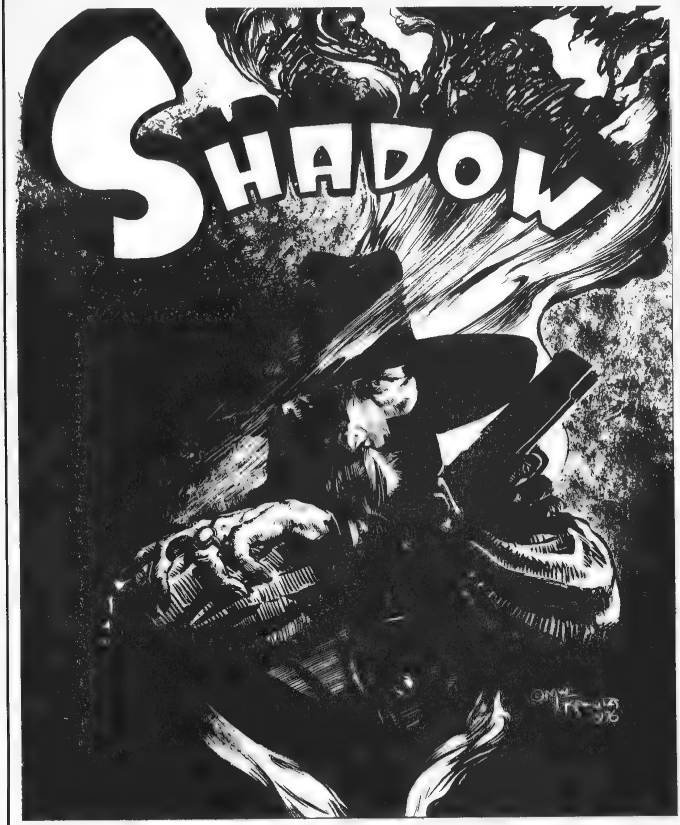
KALUTA: Yeah. I see things in terms of Burroughs the way I saw them when I was reading him. I recall when I was reading them the first time, I knew what every building in Helium looked like. I knew everything about Mars, it was no problem drawing Mars. Needless to say, I was pining for John Carter when DC got the Burroughs contract. But, they gave it to Murphy Anderson because he'd wanted it for years.

SR: *Still, I thought you did a magnificent job with* Carson of Venus. *I thought you got to the essence of what the strip was all about.*

KALUTA: Actually, I enjoyed Carson if not more, then as much as the John Carter stuff.

BLASTED BULB'S BLINKING...
...THE LIGHTNING MUST BE INTERFERING WITH THE POWER LINES!
EH--? A BAG FULL OF CASH! WHERE'D IT COME FROM?
I PLACED IT THERE, NINJA!
HA-HA-HA-HA
© 1981 DC Comics

In this four panel sequence from, 'The Night of the Ninja' provides a sample of Mike Kaluta's ability to use stark lighting and silhouettes to provide a powerful presence of *The Shadow*. From *The Shadow* #6


SHADOW

SR: *Did you ever write any of the scripts? I knew Len Wein did it initially.*

KALUTA: Well, when I got to writing them, all I did was adapt. I tried to put as much Burroughs in as I could. Joe Orlando let me do anything I wanted. Joe Kubert kept saying give me some adventure now, give me some action. And I guess the first one I wrote, perhaps the second one, was the story where *[Carson's]* trying to make fire. And I loved that scene from when I first read it. So, I decided that had to go in. And at that point, I had to write out the script, send it to Joe Kubert and get it back. It came back and he said, "This is fine. If I don't see some action in the next one, you better watch it." I knew the tone of voice he was using, he was kidding me, but at the same time, he wanted some fisticuffs. So, I think the next one was all action. I was looking forward to Havatoo because that's where Carson becomes the aviator which makes him a different character than most of Burroughs's other ones. Each one of the Burroughs' characters grow up as a certain type of person and each one gets to do that when the books begin: John Carter was a professional warlord and Carson was an aviator, stunt man and just a wiseacre. So, he's a wiseacre during the first two and a half books. When he gets to Havatoo, he becomes the aviator.

SR: *Do you have a favorite strip that you've done?*

KALUTA: *Carson of Venus*, *The Shadow*.

SR: *In* The Shadow, *the period detail was flawless. Did you do a lot of research?*

KALUTA: It's not flawless. I did a lot of research, but it's not flawless. As a matter of fact, there's some places where I really blew it. My favorite panel in the fourth issue, when Lamont Cranston and Shrevvy are getting out of the limousine in front of Bliss' mission is one place. It's a long panel with the car and all these guys rummaging through trash cans and a Fatima cigarette ad. But, it's on the Bowery. The only pictures I had of the Bowery were close-ups of the store fronts, showing the prices and showing the bums. And after I did the panel, after it was in production, I was looking at them again. I looked at the reflection in the window. The reflection was of the 6th Avenue elevated, which ran right down the Bowery. I left it out. No-one except my father caught it. See, my father lived in New York as a kid. "Hey, you forgot the 6th Avenue el."

It was a lot of fun and I wanted to go a lot further with it, but as I was so slow, they were panicking. They wanted it to come out fast.

SR: *Do you like writing your own scripts?*

KALUTA: Yeah, I also like working for someone that can write. I did one science-fiction thing for Skywald Publishing. It was called the "City of Yesterday." Actually they changed it. Originally, it was from a science-fiction short story written by a prominent science-fiction writer whose name I've forgotten.

Anyway, this thing had been adapted from a science-fiction short story, so it wasn't completely cardboard. It actually had depth. It was a snap to illustrate it. The next thing I did for them was written by a hack, and I just couldn't get up for it. So to me, it looks mediocre. Other people might really enjoy it, but to me it looks mediocre, especially compared with the other one. So, if there's someone writing it that's really *hot*, then I can go for it.

SR: *In other words, if you get a good strip, it pushes a button in you and you go: "Hey, I can do this."*

KALUTA: Yeah. And if I find a bad script, that's bad enough, then it can push a button in me and I'll go for it even more to try and save the damn thing. Like the Shadow. Got that? Not the New Shadow, the Old Shadow. Now, we'll talk about the new Shadow.

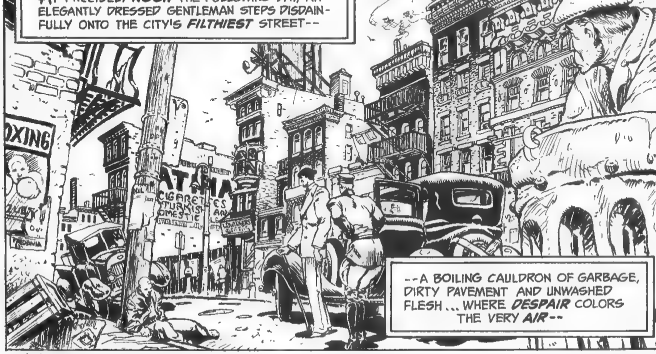
SR: *What kind of book is it going to be?*

KALUTA: It's going to be a square binding, 40-50 page comic strip, color covers. It's supposed to be out soon, if they get the damn script to me. The damn script is being written by Harlan Ellison, who's always wanted to write a Shadow story. And his first choice for an illustrator was me, but he didn't think I would do it. Gary Groth is the publisher, the fellow that does *The Comics Journal*. Gary called me up and said: "Would you be interested in this?" And I said: "Yes, I would, because you've got a good writer and it's the Shadow." It's gonna be black and white and it doesn't have to have the regular comics cliches. I don't have to show his face all the time so the kids know who it is. I can do what I want because I'm dealing with a guy who wants that kind of dedication.

SR: *Tell me about the first time you met Berni Wrightson.*

KALUTA: It was 1967 at the New York Science-Fiction convention. We made big plans to go up, Steve Hickman and myself, and we called Harper in Boston to come down and meet us. It was our first convention, not Harper's first, but Hickman's and mine. We were running around meeting Roy Krenkel and Phil Seuling and Jim Steranko, knowing that Frazetta was around somewhere. And finally meet Berni, he's this shy guy and who had won the amateur art contest. Through him we met Jeff Jones at the same time.

Rich Hauser, who ran *Spa Fon*, was there.


AT PRECISELY NOON THE FOLLOWING DAY, AN ELEGANTLY DRESSED GENTLEMAN STEPS DISDAINFULLY ONTO THE CITY'S FILTHIEST STREET--
--A BOILING CAULDRON OF GARBAGE, DIRTY PAVEMENT AND UNWASHED FLESH... WHERE DESPAIR COLORS THE VERY AIR--
© 1981 DC Comics

In critical retrospect, Kaluta said ... "I did a lot of research but it is not flawless which ran right down the Bowery. I left it out." *From The Shadow #4*

after it was in production

I looked at the reflection in the windows

The reflection of the Sixth Avenue el

He said: "You guys want to meet Frazetta?" We said: "Yeah. Sure!" It turned out that Frazetta had the room next door to ours, same floor and everything. Blew our minds. We had to stand there like a Chinese shooting gallery. We've got all our portfolios under our arms and Frazetta's crawling around on the floor looking to plug the TV in for his kids. We're saying: "He's a real man. Look!" He's got that vibrant charisma about him. We were just in awe. He looked at all our stuff, commented, saying: "I didn't know there were other people interested in doing this kind of stuff." Then Bob Barett went with him out to Brooklyn and came back with a big stack of his paintings. The room was filled with people oohing and aahhing. Frazetta's standing there scratching his head, going, "Wow!" He didn't realize that people were really flipping over his stuff, that people understood what he was doing, that he was creating these vibrant fantasy worlds.

SR: *Didn't you assist Wrightson on* Nightmaster, *along with Hickman, Jones . . .?*

KALUTA: Not Hickman, Harper.

SR: *Harper. You can see the influence of diverse hands, Jones's influence is particularly evident.*

KALUTA: Back then Jones was helping Berni a lot because Bernie hadn't worked. He started working the previous August in '68 and having his own book was quite a chore for him.

SR: *I wanted to ask you about* Web of Horror. *How did that come about?*

KALUTA: A fellow named Terry Bisson, called Berni saying that he was going to put out a weird magazine. He like Berni's work, so we went down there. The guy liked it and said: "Okay, draw up some stuff. Read a script or two." And I got mine finished just after the deadline for the first issue. So, it came out in the second issue.

We were having a ball. Things were coming together and it looked like EC all over again. The problem was of course, that the publisher was not into it. The publisher was into girlie magazines. This was a little thing on the side that Terry Bisson wanted to do, so it didn't get distributed. One day after Berni Wrightson and Bruce Jones had become the editors of the thing, they went up there and the place was empty. The guy had moved.

SR: *Tell me about* Abyss *now. How did you all get into it?*

KALUTA: It was probably Bruce Jones's idea to get together and do a magazine.

SR: *Was* Abyss *a labor of love, or were you trying to reach a wider audience and make a little money at the same time?*

KALUTA: We were trying to make money. The wider audience, I don't know about. It was a money-making proposition, but it didn't make any of course. Actually, it was the first thing we were working on where someone wasn't telling us what to do. So, it was a lot of fun to do.

SR: *You all seemed to travel in the same circles, at least artistically.*

KALUTA: When we all got to New York finally, yeah. I was in Northern Virginia, Berni was in Baltimore and Jeff was in Atlanta, but we all admired the same fellows: Krenkel, Williamson and Frazetta and the other dead artists. We all ended up becoming mutual friends, just through the mail and working in fanzines. Of course, Berni didn't work in the fanzines until we all met. Still and all, it was interesting that a lot of people knew each other before we met.

SR: *Did you know each other by reputation?*

KALUTA: I didn't know Berni's work, but I did know Jeff's. Berni had been working on the Baltimore newspaper, *The Baltimore Sun*. I didn't see any of his work until '67.

SR: *When you and Wrightson and Jones were starting out in comics in the late 60s and early 70s did you consciously think about creating a comics Renaissance, or did it come about purely by accident?*

KALUTA: No, not consciously. We were just conscious of being in the same city that Al Williamson, Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta used to fart around in when they were kids. We used to get off on that. We'd say things like, "God, look at that, the way that skyscraper goes. It looks like Krenkel did that. I bet he even stood here and looked at it." That kind of stuff.

SR: *When you and the others were starting out did you realize that you had a vision that set you apart from the people working in comics who were just hacks?*

KALUTA: It never came as a realization like it would in a film or something. Because I look around and I see people that I admire; it always surprises me when they say they're fans of my work, because I'm such a fan of theirs.

SR: *Tell me about the Studio. Why did you and Berni and Barry and Jeff decide to work together?*

KALUTA: Barry came to me with an idea. He said: "Your place is too small, Michael. Why don't we get a studio together, and then we can work over there and keep our houses to live in." I said: "It's a good idea but I can't afford it so I have to live where I work. I haven't worked around people since I've moved out of Berni's place back in the early '70s, and I like living alone."

But he got together with Berni who had always wanted to do the same thing. So, they went around with Jeff, trucking up and down lower Manhattan, looking for a place. They found a place and they begged me to come in on it. I said: "I can't really afford it. I can't really afford it." They begged and begged and begged. So finally I said, yeah. When I was at the Studio. I was never home, I was hanging out down at the Studio. I did end up sleeping there a lot and working there a lot.

SR: *Do you find it distracting to be working around people whose work habits are different?*

KALUTA: Well, at first we all found it distracting. It took me six months to be able to really work there. I chose to work from 5 P.M. until dawn, when no one else was there. Jeff would come in really early in the morning. Barry would come in about noon.

Jeff Jones and Michael Kaluta met when they were aspiring artists emulating the work of Roy Krenkel and Frank Frazetta. As both of them progressed, each artist developed his own personal style and perspective. An example of Jone's later work from Idyll

Berni would come in about ten and so it started working out. After a while, it did work out very nicely. And then, as soon as the Studio book started going into operation, things started falling apart, because we weren't concentrating on drawing, we were trying to create a book. The book we created is not the book that you see, of course. There were a lot of compromises and a lot of hassles that happened; the basic reason being the difficulty of communications between New York and England. It's 3,000 miles of water. It's very difficult to get any ideas across. We made a number of trips there and finally had to be there and go over page by page, with them telling us what they could actually afford to do and us telling them what we want and trying to work something out between the two.

SR: *Were you satisfied with the color separations?*

KALUTA: No, not satisfied. I'm glad it's out, because people don't know what the stuff looks like in the originals. To them, the book is surprising. The writing is nice. And as a book, I think it's a winner. I just want the distribution company to get it out, so people would know where it is. But it's not the book we wanted.

SR: *What are your hobbies?*

KALUTA: Playing the guitar, photography. Drawing pictures is my hobby as well as looking at pictures and watching people.

SR: *Do a lot of the faces and mannerisms in your work come from watching people?*

KALUTA: Yeah, especially if I'm watching them while I'm working on a project. Then I'll be watching for specific things, what happens to clothes with certain movements and stuff like that. So, I will spend some time doing that.

SR: *Do you ever work from photographs of actors, the way Williamson used to work from photographs of Buster Crabbe and Stewart Granger?*

KALUTA: Not really, unless it was supposed to be that person. I use photographs very infrequently. And when I use reference, I don't draw with whatever reference I have in front of me. I look at the reference, study it, and then keep it in my mind when I draw. That's how the 30's feeling in the Shadow comes out. Not because I had a bunch of photographs of the '30s in front of me when I drew it, but because I looked through a lot of books, walked around the city, looked at buildings and watched a lot of '30's movies. I just kept 'em in the back of my mind while I drew, instead of having the reference right there in front of me. The only time I ever had any reference was one automobile that I wanted to be a specific automobile for the fourth issue, the Hudson Terraplane.

SR: *Tell me about your work habits. What's an average, busy day like for you?*

KALUTA: A busy day is not going out, not seeing anybody, just working for 17 or 18 hours, or 24 or 36. That's when I'm on a roll.

SR: *You mean you'll stay at the drawing board for 16 hours at a stretch?*

KALUTA: Yeah, because I'll really be into what I'm doing. But that doesn't happen every day or even every week. But when it does happen, its generally for a long period of time until that project is finished. After that, it's very hard to get me back to it.

© 1981 DC Comics
"THEN...THE DARKNESS SEEMS TO SOUPPY INTO A TALL, TERRIBLE FORM, AND A CHILLED STEEL VOICE COMMANDS--
THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS!
SURE WE WILL--
KRAK KRAK KRAK
--AFTER WE EMPTY 'EM INTO YA!
DID...DID WE GET 'IM?
I DUNNO... HE'S GONE!
HA HA HA
KLNK HA HA

Mike Ka uta took the time to work on thirties details "I look at the reference, study it, and then keep it in mind when I drew That's how the thirties feelings in *The Shadow* comes out Not because I had a bunch of photos of the thirties in front of me when I drew it From *Shadow* #4

SR: *What are your favorite kinds of paper and your favorite type of pen?*

KALUTA: I've got a reputation with my friends for being a crazyman because I like drawing on things that dissolve after a few years, typing paper and the stub of a pencil. I've tried various points, to get it together, get a bunch of good materials and work. That lasts for as long as the materials last, then I go back to whatever's lying around.

SR: *So you're not too picky?*

KALUTA: I'm, not picky at all, no. I have a favorite pen, called an artists point by Hunt. It's fairly flexible, and yet will get a very fine line also. So that's what I use, mostly.

SR: *You don't ink with a brush at all?*

KALUTA: Yeah, I do.

SR: *I thought it was mostly pen work.*

KALUTA: No. Well, mostly pen work, but I do use a brush.

SR: *What kind of colors do you use?*

KALUTA: Dr. Martin's dyes and watercolors. I have a set of Grumbacher Symphonic watercolors that I use, but I use it heavily with neutral tint as a grey. Grumbacher's are very bright. But, the problem with doing ink drawings and coloring them with watercolors is that they're not transparent, they're not opaque, they're translusicent, so they'll cover over the black ink. So, you have to spray the hell out of it with crystal clear spray to get the black up or reink. I don't like reinking.

SR: *How about oils? You don't use oils very often, but were you satisfied with the few oil paintings you've published?*

KALUTA: Oh, yes. I'm very satisfied with those. I used to do about one a year. I do two different kinds of oil paintings. One is like the cover I did for *Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction*, and the first version of *In The Twinkling Of An Eye* which never actually saw print as an oil painting except in *The Studio* book. I did a watercolor version of it also. But then I have the other kind of oil painting, which came out in the *Dante's Inferno* portfolio, which is a looser, sketchier kind of thing. That's how they taught me to paint. It's using all of the things I learned in school, very loosely applied stuff and not very highly rendered like people are used to seeing on the covers of pocket books.

SR: *How did you come to design* Starstruck*?*

cont. on page 93

BUZZ DIXON FROM THE COAST

SHUT THE GATE!

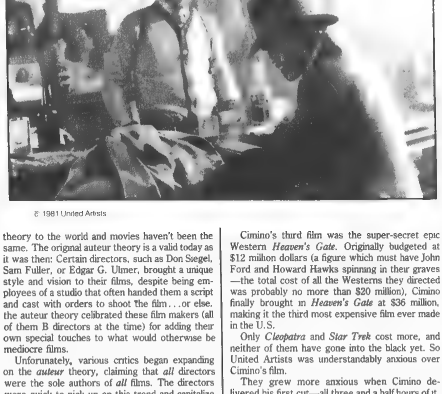
Once upon a time, directors were viewed as being important employees in the film business. They were catered to and respected, but were treated as employees nonetheless. This meant when a director began squandering money on a film he could and would be fired to keep the production from becoming an unmitigated disaster.

The *Cahiers du Cinema* introduced the *auteur* theory to the world and movies haven't been the same. The original auteur theory is a valid today as it was then: Certain directors, such as Don Siegel, Sam Fuller, or Edgar G. Ulmer, brought a unique style and vision to their films, despite being employees of a studio that often handed them a script and cast with orders to shoot The film . . . or else. the auteur theory celibrated these film makers (all of them B directors at the time) for adding their own special touches to what would otherwise be mediocre films.

Unforunately, various critics began expanding on the *auteur* theory, claiming that *all* directors were the sole authors of *all* films. The directors were quick to pick up on this trend and capitalize on it.

The result is that directors are now looked upon as demi-gods, above mere mortals. A director with a single successful picture behind him (or even a mediocre picture and a good press agent) can command tremendous power over a film's script, production, and budget.

A case of point is *Heaven's Gate* the as-yet-to-be-released third feature by director Michael Cimino. Cimino's earlier films, *Thunderbolt and Lightfoot* and *The Deer Hunter*, both proved to be successful at the box office. Cynics may point out that the former had Clint Eastwood and that the latter gained much attention from publacty fall-out from Fancis Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*, but an honest appraisal would be that both film's would have been well received despite their obvious box office attractions.



© 1981 United Artists

Cimino's third film was the super-secret epic Western *Heaven's Gate*. Originally budgeted at $12 million dollars (a figure which must have John Ford and Howard Hawks spinning in their graves —the total cost of all the Westerns they directed was probably no more than $20 million), Cimino finally brought in *Heaven's Gate* at $36 million, making it the third most expensive film ever made in the U.S.

Only *Cleopatra* and *Star Trek* cost more, and neither of them have gone into the black yet. So United Artists was understandably anxious over Cimino's film.

They grew more anxious when Cimino delivered his first cut—all three and a half hours of it. Theatres make money by selling tickets. They make more money by selling more tickets. Since there is a limited number of tickets to be sold at each showing, the obvious answer is to have more showings. It becomes very difficult to market a three and a half hour film when everybody else is releasing 90 to 100 minute movies.

Still, overly long films have made profits before, so United Artists was willing to let *Heaven's Gate* run at its full length if they were certain that they had a bonafide classic on their hands.

Early reports indicate that *Heaven's Gate* is anything but a classic.

In an unprecedented move, United Artists opened the film and then closed it after one night in New York. Muttering something about the film "needing work," Cimino and the producers were last seen retreating into their editing rooms after a savaging by the New York film critics.

Other films have been withdrawn from proposed release dates in order to work new publicity campaigns or fix badly done material—Howard Hughe's *The Outlaw* and Buena Vista's *Watcher in the Woods* are two that come to mind. But *Heaven's Gate* was actually released and reserved seats sold when the call back came.

It's been reported that United Artists did not approve an initial cut down to 2½ hours. The studio still wants another 20 to 30 minutes trimmed from the film.

The question is, why didn't somebody see this coming? United Artists obviously had faith in Cimino's script or they wouldn't have given him the original $12 million to do it. Cimino obviously thought he had control of the film and knew what he was doing. Where then, did the problem occur?

It's unfair to blame either United Artists or Michael Cimino. Power is the name of the game in Hollywood; writers, directors, and actors have been using every sort of devious, underhanded film-flammery to control their projects since the beginning of the film industry. However, the cult of the director, has given too much power too quickly to too many young film makers at a terrible cost to their careers and artistic growth.

Consider: *Heaven's Gate* is Cimino's third film. It took him two years to make. Howard Hawks' third film was *The Crowd Roars* in 1932. Within the next two years he'd directed five more films, including *Scarface* and *Viva Villa!* John Ford was directing films well back into the silent era. His first two years in sound films saw eight films released.

The problem is than too many film makers are being given carte blanche on films with only a few movies to their credits. Lacking the experience and the restraint of older film makers, the new directors indulge their private fantasies.

The result is films like *1941*, *The Blues Brothers*, and scores of others. Spielberg is lucky to have two major successes behing him—had *1941* been made before *Jaws*, his career would have sunk. John Landis is lucky to have *Animal House* in his hip pocket as well as having *The Blues Brothers* turn a bit of a profit—he nearly doubled the budget on his second major film, going from $17 million to $30 million.

Today Hollywood finds it eager to deal with problems by throwing money at them. People who can create impressive films on small budgets frighten the big money and power-brokers. Those

people have brains and imagination, two qualities that frighten the average denizen of Hollywood.

The bubble is about to burst on Hollywood again. A repeat of the disasterous 1968 and 1972 era, when it seemed as if everybody in the world forgot how to make movies, is imminent. Today's film market is overloaded with overpriced, shallow films.

Now is the time to start moving into independent, low-budget features. Within five years the major companies will be reeling with confusion, unable to figure out what the public wants and unwilling to spend the time to make good films. The low budget, independent filmmakers will find markets blooming for their productions as theatres look for anything to relieve the awful economic

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disaster about to befall Hollywood.

Get in on the ground floor, kids.

* * *

GOD BLESS LILY ST. CYR!

Production has begun in England on the sequel to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Jim Sharman directs Richard O'Brien's words and music with most of the original cast returning for a second go-around (relax, Tim Curry is back). Two titles have been proposed (*Shock Treatment* and *The Brad and Janet Show*) although it is possible that the film may carry a third title after the film is completed.

* * *

THE GULF BETWEEN

Ever wonder why comics are so often horribly garbled by the time they're translated to the screen? No small credit must be handed out to the Hollywood film establishment, which operates in a cultural vacuum, knowing nothing but what it's seen on TV or in movie theatres.

Consider this review of the two-part opening episode of THE INCREDIBLE HULK by *Daily Variety*. Criticizing the two hour show for being an hour too long, the review took the episode to task for degenerating into "a pyrotechnics display . . . breaking up all those scientific gimmicks. Maybe the kids found it a delight, but for anyone else, it's a long yawn."

The story, as those of you who've seen it know, involved the Hulk being captured and carted off to a top secret military base. The first hour, which *Variery* praised as rising "above the level of the cartoon (sic!) on which the series is based," was dull and predictable. The second hour finally fulfilled a four season wait by Hulk fans when it showed the jolly green goliath tearing the hell out of a top secret military installation. For once a bonafide Hulk story made it to the screen instead of the typical Hollywood "people" story.

What Hollywood means by a "people" story is a story that is so basic, vague, and unspecific that it could be used as an episode of any TV series. Want a western? Let the characters ride horses and carry six-shooters. Want a spy tale? Let them drive Aston-Martins and carry Walther PPKs. Want a space opera? Let them fly Colonial Vipers and carry blasters.

Small wonder Hollywood films in general and television in particular are so bland and mediocre. When producers are so contemptuous of outside sources that they ignore rich bodies of work *that have been done right* in favor of jury-rigged, contradictory, meandering films that fail to live up to their story potential, it's small wonder that the viewers are turning off their sets and staying away from theatres.

* * *

FADE TO BLACK

This could have been a very good horror film.
This could have been a very good dramatic film.
This could have been a very good love story.
This could have been a very good comedy.
This is not a very good movie.

Fade to Black's main problem is that it never decides which direction it wants to take. The first five minutes of the film offered great promise, especially in writer/director Vernon Zimmerman's skillful use of classic movie dialogue to counterpoint a real conversation occuring in the foreground.

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But this soon gave way to cheap, tawdry melodrama. One doesn't know how to react to the overbearing, overacted appearance of Eric Binford's aunt/mother. The swipe at *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?* is funny but the crudeness of the expository scenes is too jarring for titters. Is it a joke, or just poor filmmaking?

We can never tell. *Fade to Black* refuses to stay on any one tack long enough to allow the audience to decide how to react to the film. Parts of the film are hilarious, others touching, but most of it is too incongruous.

Especially hard to take is the character of Eric Binford (Dennis Christopher). Eric should be an extremely complex and subtle person. Unfortunately, Christopher is never given much needed direction by Zimmerman on how to shape Eric The result is a jangled, neurotic collection of cliches.

Worst of all, the film is not faithful to it's own premise. Film buffs (as well as many other types of fans and compulsive collectors) use their private fantasy world of movies as an insulation between themselves and reality. Assault a film buff's pride and emotion and he (or she) will only retreat further into this fantasy world. Attack the fantasy world and then maybe—just maybe—one might get a reaction.

Still, it's a fascinatng premise. *Fade to Black* is a good film to watch in private or with a few friends. Be forewarned: It's neither good enough to love nor bad enough to hate.

* * *

QUOTE AND RUN: ALAN DEAN FOSTER

"From my peripheral involvement with *The Black Hole* it was quite evident that many people working on the film were aware of its problems. Apparently no one tired, or was able, to convey these feelings to the powers-that-be. Creative talent abounds at Disney. The question it, does any of it have the guts to stand up for what it believes in, and does the management have the flexibility to listen. . . I could give Disney a list of 50 books which would have made a better (commercially and aesthetically) science fiction film than *The Black Hole*. So could any long-time sf reader. So could any Burbank librarian." ■

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THREE PERCEPTIONS:

© 1981 Don McGregor

by DON McGREGOR

Angelic,

© 1981 Continuum Publishing

© 1981 Jeff Phillips

Bloody,

and Distorted

Reactions.

A commentary on a variety of products and the perceptions they and their creators, convey. In all other respects the three individual segments that follow are unrelated.

The first focuses on Steven Spielberg's *Special Edition of Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, the second on Brian DePalma's *Dressed to Kill*, and the third, on the darlings and the harpies of the comics industries, of which *The Comics Times* is a part, the comics fanzines.

By the time I'm finished here I'll probably be standing throat deep in very hot water, perhaps even scalding water.

An inner voice tells me that sometimes it is prudent not to say anything. Go with the flow. Leave well enough alone.

You know what I'm talking about. You've all had moments when you've made the same excuses for not speaking out, for not voicing your reactions. But, there are times when you did speak out, times when you did stand behind what you said, backed your words with actions. And that's when the words really count, when you back them with deeds. I'm also sure that there were times that you spoke out and it cost you dearly, or did not make you friends. But inside, where the little voice keeps tabs on who you are and who you are becoming, you knew you did the right thing by taking a stand.

Sometimes you have to voice your reactions, as honestly as you can, despite the consequences. For me, this is such a time

ANGELIC PERCEPTIONS

I enjoy the hell out of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*.

Unequivocably!

I did not undergo any religious catharsis. The film does not inspire illusions of salvation or saviors in me. When I walk out of the theater I am not numb and mumbling. I do not look with a convert's eyes toward the heavens, seeking movement amidst the stars.

But I do leave the theater feeling good, and while I am sitting through the film I really enjoy myself. I like *Close Encounters*' sense of buoyancy, its verve, its tensions, its effective storytelling; but most of all, I enjoy its humane perceptions and its optimism.

And lord knows, there isn't a lot of optimism around in films these day!

Spielberg's apparently natural talent for the film medium is evident from some of his earliest endeavors, from the adaptation of Richard Matheson's short story, *Duel*, to *Sugarland Express* and *Jaws*.

When I first read that *Duel* was being made as a television movie, I figured it would lose the power that its source had. Most car chase films, and their variations of trucks, buses, Winnebagoes, motorcycles, scooters, and tricycles quickly become tedious, I assumed that, in typical TV fashion, the makers of the films would pad the essential premise with an hour's worth of sudsy dramatics. Since car collisions, with their shattered windshields and rending of metal and fiberglass fenders, are considered "safe" forms of violence, Matheson's terrifying tale of a monstrous truck challenging a lone automobile driver to a suicidal chase along vast desert highways must have been an easy sell.

Why a man throwing a fist is considered harmful violence (let's take Robert Conrad's *Wild Wild West* as an example) when car wrecks and demolitions are not (take any current dramatic TV series) is a puzzle to me. One car accident can kill or maim many lives, although that is never evident on most TV programs. A fist to the jaw might add some bucks to a dentist's coffers, but it is not as potentially lethal as reckless driving. *Duel*, unlike most television movies, was not tedious; it had a crackling pace (much like the story on which it was based) and established a very real sense of danger.

I was completely taken with the film version. All of the tensions in Matheson's story remained, including the hinted at allusions to the contemporary combat of man vs. machine. This mechanical force of gargantuan dimensions is presented as the dinosaur of the 20th Century, an inexplicable, implacable monster in an amok and threatening personal safety.

A few years later, when I went to see *Jaws*, I had no idea that the same man who directed *Duel* was the director of this big fish movie. In fact I only happened to see the film on opening day because I was back in my home state and my younger brother, Scott, and I could see a matinee for a dollar. I figured, "What the hell? It'll probably be another *Towering Inferno* or *Poseidon Adventure*, but for a dollar what can you lose?" Once again I was taken by surprise, swept up into Spielberg's cinematic narrative.

Scott was not the only one who yelled when that goddam shark first rose up out of the water.

Spielberg displayed a marvelous sense of pace and resolution, and a knack for meticulous detail, with his little additions that give each scene its own reason for being. With *Close Encounters* he broadened the area of his story telling. He did not abandon the tightly edited suspense sequences he had fashioned so carefully with *Duel* and *Jaws*, but now there was a complexity and warmth to his protagonists that made them more than stock characters swept up inevitably to some explicit moment of confrontation against almost supernatural forces.

Spielberg was cautious in his first version of *Close Encounters*. Remember, after the millions of dollars were dispensed with, it was still a flying saucer picture (one of those suspect and mostly disasterous, cheaply - made sub - genre films from the 1950s). Spielberg carefully included scenes with Dreyfuss at work in an electrical plant, thereby having the opportunity to record the havoc and technical details of the wide - scale power failures caused by the passage of the UFOs. He included a long session, with Air Force officials who meet with and interviewed witnesses of extra-terrestrial visits to Earth. He was covering himself as much as possible, anticipating rejection, I would suppose, from the magazine and newspaper critics. Spielberg kept reinforcing the idea that this was a sincere appraisal of the situation, with no relation to the exploitation cheapies of the 50s. I also had the impression that Spielberg employed a deliberately obtuse narrative and conclusion to his first *Close Encounters*, in an attempt to gauge the initial critical reception to such a fanciful, at times almost angelic, perception of mankind's first encounter with life from another planet. The dash of religiosity as the alien descends from the city - huge, multi - tiered Mother Ship, seems another calculated ploy, intended for prospective cultists who could then read whatever mystical manifestos or allegories they chose.

The credits of *Close Encounters* appeared against a plain black background. The music was expectantly awaiting the first flying saucer. And then the screen burst into startling light, the intense brightness of the desert during a sandstorm, and the Dolby stereo sound erupted around us. We were five rows from the front. We were right in the middle of the wind and sand.

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When you wish upon a star Roy Neary (Richard Dreyfuss) can only gaze in awe at his encounter of the third kind

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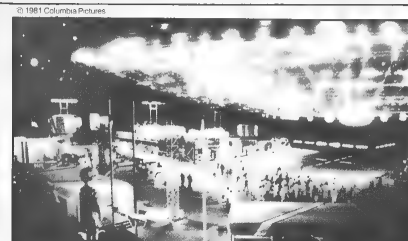

Cary Guffey watches as the massive Mother Ship begins the long voyage home

At the time, I could not determine whether I enjoyed the movie so much because of its merits or if it was because my wife Marsha and I were enjoying ourselves so much no matter where we were, as long as we were together. The events that are happening in your life at any given moment certainly affects how you feel about what you are viewing on the screen. If a film, or any entertainment for that matter, touches on some situation that you have lived through, and records it in a way that triggers the correlating memories in your own life, the film becomes an intensely personal film for you.

Close Encounters worked, for whatever reasons. Spielberg coaxed animated performances from Richard Dreyfuss and little four year old Cary Guffey. When the aliens come for the little boy who has described them with delight as "Ice Cream!", Guffey's puerile face is a wondrous surface of beatific welcome and joy. Spielberg has said that the performance he managed to get on film of Cary is "the proudest part of the picture for me." Spielberg has a right to be proud; he has orchestrated one of the most natural childhood performances on film. Francios Truffaut plays French scientist, Claude Lacombe. Truffaut is in enthusiastic pursuit of these UFO phenomena. He is an adult whose face has not lost the guileless receptivity and excited anticipation that can, under the right conditions, exist in very young children.

Truffaut, the director, has more than rivalled Spielberg's ability to capture startlingly beautiful performances from children in his own film, *Small Change*. This is Truffaut's cinematic homage to the terrors, misconcpetions and joys of childhood. If you haven't ever seen it and you can locate it playing somewhere, do yourself a favor and spend two hours with Truffaut's children It won't seem like two hours have passed, you won't want to see the film end. Those kids will become people you know and treasure. When the movie ends, it will sadden you that you won't see them again.

When *Close Encounters* returned more than $125 million in film rentals to the film's backers, Columbia made Spielberg an unorthodox proposal. They knew that Spielberg had only filmed 135 pages of his 160 page script and they suggested that he film the scenes he did not have the budget to do the first time around. Spielberg readily accepted.

"Filmmaking should never be a dry - cement process," Spielberg said. "You can often have different ideas about a film months or years later and there are points that can be added later to improve the story's impact. But it's not often that you get the chance to change the work to match your vision."

I know what Spielberg means.

When I am at comic conventions talking to audiences, I am sometimes asked if I'd like to see the *Panther's Rage* series that I wrote for Marvel Comics from 1973 to 1975 reprinted as one of the company's Graphic Novel books.

The idea has its appeal. Although, if push came to shove, I am not sure I'd actually like to spend the time and effort that I feel would be required to correct the flaws in the senes.

Old mistakes haunt you.

Especially the ones in print.

You are always aware of the scene that didn't quite work, the line that was awkward. This knowledge stays with you, even when the work has garnered favorable reactions. You know in your heart of hearts where you screwed up, or where the production went astray, or where changes were made that you didn't see until the comic was in print. By then it was too late Charlie, and you had to live with the final product. In your mind, whenever you see a page where something went awry you see it the way you would have liked it to be. You know that if you had the chance to redo it, chances are you could make it better. This time maybe you would understand how to break a knotty problem. You know that if you had the chance to do this the book would be a lot easier to live with. You know that you could look at the book without experiencing all the familiar pangs and twinges when you reach a page or panel that you feel failed.

On the other hand, you have the odd notion that no matter how many times you try, it will never completely meet with your satisfaction. You'll just have to keep on trying, giving the audience the best you can.

While I haven't read the senes in the five years since I finished it, the idea that I could make those books better is intriguing. I could correct the embarrassing mistakes. I could rework the poorly executed sequences where graphics and text did not quite merge the way I'd hoped they would. Perhaps, even, I might be able to expand some of the sequences which were cramped due to the dictates of the thirteen or seventeen page format of a bi - monthly comic. I still have confidence that the 13 chapter serial works in terms of character, plot and theme. I have less confidence about the actual execution.

Hopefully I have become a better writer during the ensuing years, and with the distance of time to reflect upon the work, could find ways to make it clearer, less cluttered, and sharper in its intent. That is my hope. I don't think about the books very much unless I am showed some scene or page, when I am at a convention. I do have a small desire to make it better at those moments. *Panther's Rage* is a body of work that took over two years of my life to produce, and as such I'd like to see it in the best form possible.

I doubt that the comics executives share the readers' enthusiasm. Even if the whimsical notion to reprint the material did pass through their heads I'm sure they would not let me rework it. As well, we probably could not agree on contractual terms. The Work Made For Hire contracts were imposed by the company in 1978. That was the same year that the copyright laws were changed to protect writers and artists unless they signed a sheet of paper stating that they were not writers but merely producing works for hire. The edict came down. Everyone must sign. Editors, who were also writers, imposed the contract with a firm hand. I kept waiting for Zorro to confront Count Monestario, but he never did. The Work Made For Hire contracts went into effect. The contract was unfair and wrong in 1978. It is still wrong in 1980. I would not sign that contract in the past, and I'm damned if I'll sign it now.

Besides; the whole idea is probably a moot point since the company was never enthralled with the Panther series during its run and have never expressed any softening of attitude since then. Nevertheless, I understand Spielberg's desire to rework his film and try to shape it closer to the way he saw the work during its conception stages.

When I saw the *Special Edition of Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, I wondered if the film would be drastically altered in structure and impact, if the few vague dissatisfactions I had had about the conclusion of the original would still pinch the edges of my own dramatic sense.

The theater in which I saw the *Special Edition of Close Encounters of the Third Kind* did not have Dolby Stereo sound. That factor alone made a great difference in the impact of the film. It also made a great difference when I saw *The Black Stallion* without the precise usage of sound - effects to enhance certain key scenes.

Despite that, I found myself immediately re-involved in *Close Encounters*. When Richard Dreyfuss frantically pares over his map, lost in the dark stretches of Indiana woods, and the first UFO stops behind his truck, and instead of passing, rises upward beyond the back window, I was taken in once again. I had that silly grin of anticipation, that first surge of enjoyment. I was ready. Let them bring on Cary Guffey and the saucers.

I enjoyed Spielberg's meticulous attention to

detail, the little fillips he added to make a scene convincing or to stand out in your mind. Cary Guffey's mother played by Melinda Dillon, waking up to the strange noises and commotion created by the near vicinity of the Mother Ship, while her television plays an episode of Angie Dickinson's *Police Woman* in the background (In fact I like the way Spielberg includes television programming, from soap operas to cartoons to news programs throughout the film); the little red ball of light representing the smallest of the Unidentified Flying Objects that chases in Tinker Bell fashion its larger allies; Richard Dreyfuss's older son, sitting at the dinner table with silent tears running down his cheeks as he watches his father-shape has mash potatoes into some incomprehensible object; Teri Garr, abandoning her husband and his unconventional, socially embarrassing behavior, backing the family station wagon out of their driveway and running over one of the kid's tricycles. *Close Encounters* has an abundance of such touches that bring it to life, establish the roles of men and women as well as family. I am sure that the decision to delete this dialogue was made in an attempt to make her a more sympathetic character, but a real moment of honest confrontation is lost. One family scene has been added between husband, wife and children revealing the tension in the household in an emotional moment of screaming accusations and tears of anguish. The child's pain and anger is well realized, and while this is a short scene, it has the power of recognition of a family unit that has broken down in terms of affection and communication.

In the original, when Dreyfuss and the Melinda Dillon character reunite and set out for Devil's Tower, the motivations of the military and government in fabricating a mass evacuation to keep the populace away from the landing site were vague. Since this film was made during the Watergate era it appears that Spielberg figured that it was enough to simply have the government perpetrate such a hoax without fully explaining its motivations.

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The extraterrestials hover above "Devil's Tower" and the special installation built to welcome them

occurences in a world we are familiar with.

The Special Edition is tighter than the original. The sequences at the power plant are gone, as are the scenes where the UFO witnesses testify before the Air Force committee. I think Spielberg realized that the film had been accepted by audiences and that the flying saucer material was no longer intrinsic, so he could abandon those time consuming moments. There are several deletions, from the gradual buildup of Dreyfuss' obsession with reconstructing a model of Devil's Tower (where the saucers will eventually congregate). The family sequences are also altered to some degree. In the original, when Teri Garr first learns that Dreyfuss has lost his job, she turns to him with a betrayed, bitter look and snaps, "I want you to know I'm not going to get a job. I'm not going to go to work, so don't ever ask." In the *Special Edition* the scene is cut just before she speaks those lines, and I think that was an unfortunate omission. With the wife's stance clearly stated, we understand her frame of mind, her status in the suburban society they live in and her concept of the positions and

In fact, my one disappointment with the original *Close Encounters* is that right at the finale, the movie's tension and dramatic storytelling were abandoned. Now I know that at the conclusion Spielberg wanted the Third Encounter (the meeting with the aliens) to have a documentary tone and thus he veered away from his usual cinematic narration of sharply edited cuts and precise, taut storytelling. He wanted the audience to be observers, as if this was a real meeting between mankind and intelligent life from beyond with all the magnificent ramifications that such a meeting would imply. But after he has established all the tension and setbacks that bar Dreyfuss' and Dillon's way to the rendezvous point, he suddenly lets them walk nonchalantly into the scene. No one seems to care that there are unwanted witnesses. This left me with a sense of dramatic letdown that is only partially redeemed by the arrival of clusters of smaller saucers and the breathtaking, monstrous mother ship.

In the *Special Edition* the conclusion is more striking. Spielberg offers the audience reasons as to why the military act as they do, and he spends more time with the fascinating encounter itself. The time when the Mother Ship descends with its multitude of lights, Dreyfuss and Truffaut have more time to react and to voice that reaction to each other. If the audience still isn't sure how Truffaut and the military men know that only Dreyfuss will be allowed aboard the Mother Ship, it is certainly clear that the little aliens lead only Dreyuss aboard.

The new material for *The Special Edition* was filmed at the Burbank Studios in Death Valley, California. Robert Swarthe, who also worked on *Star Trek, The Motion Picture*, was in charge of the effects work for the new addition. There aren't a lot of them, but what new effects there are, are quite fine.

When Dreyfuss and the audience step inside the Mother Ship, the little aliens who huddle around Dreyfuss and escort him aboard mysteriously disappear. Dreyfuss is suddenly alone. He steps forward. He looks upward. Tier after tier of city levels stretch away into amber radiance. No one comes to meet him. He stands, transfixed, dazzled by the scintillating color, the immense structure.

I have heard that there have been discussions about filming a sequel, *Close Encounters of the Fourth Kind*. That would be a tricky sequel, indeed. If much of the film takes place aboard the Mother Ship, exploring the entire schematic and culture, its mores and philosophy, we are in an alien setting throughout. The first film works so well because it establishes a normal, average environment with average people being slowly thrust into this unusual situation. With the loss of a commonplace setting, the audience's identification with the lead character will be difficult to surmount. The strangeness of the aliens can be hinted at in this version, but it must be fully explored in the sequel, if there is one. Each tier of the tremendous inner world of the ship would have to reveal not only its physical oddities, but also the ways of life lived there. Also Dreyfuss as the dreamer and embodiment of the child living in an adult world must be reestablished, linking him once again to all who want that capacity for wonder rekindled in themselves.

It will be interesting to see if they can do it.

As for this *Special Edition*, even the Disney theme song, *When You Wish Upon A Star* is included. Sadly the Disney folk have discarded the fantasy theme for a new, moppet disco-trendy song.

When we walked out of the theater I could hear Jiminy Cricket, with the help of Cliff Edwards tremulous voice, singing those words of hope and possibility.

And such things as hope and possibility aren't just for Pinnochio folks.

BLOODY PERCEPTIONS

I have to admit, I was seduced by Angie Dickenson.

I saw Angie on the *Tonight Show* telling Johnny Carson about her new film, *Dressed to Kill*. Now I knew that this was Brian DePalma's new film, and I really had no desire to subject myself to another nauseating, gimmicky, implausable, bloody Hitchcock rip-off.

Did I mince words there?

What I mean is that I had learned from

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A girl can't be too careful nowadays, especially with all the manical killers running amok in Brian DePalma movies.

viewing *Carrie*, that DePalma could play around with the camera, and that with the help of a beautiful performance by Sissy Spacek, he could pretend to care about his characters and then discard any human concerns or even true suspense or terror and settle for Schlock-shock!

Am I still mincing words?

When I saw DePalma's *Obsession* and Cliff Robertson walked up the Cathedral steps in what seemed to be an endless succession of times, I realized that if he thought Hitchcock did something once (as Hitchcock had Martin Balsam walk up to the forbidden, menacing house in *Psycho*), that it would really be innovative and stimulating to do it again and again and again and . . .

When I saw DePalma's *The Fury*, and watched him play his bloody marionettes, normally of the female persuasion, into various gruesome ends and displayed that he thought the ultimate shocker was having a telekinetically powered man spin his lover around in the air by thought-power until blood squirted from between her legs and sprayed the wallpaper, I had had my fill of Mr. DePalma, thank you.

I think that expresses my feelings adequately.

And then came Angie on the *Tonight Show*.

She talked about her erotic behavior in a shower sequence, and made intimations about her oral ravishment in the backseat of a New York taxi cab

Hmmm.

I'm not much on gushing blood, or hacked off limbs, or castration, or disemboweiment as entertainment, but a good healthy dose of eroticism in a film would be nice. I also read in a review in *Variety* that claimed *Dressed To Kill* pushed the R rating to its furthest boundaries. It was the most sexually orientated film to be released by a major movie studio this year with sequences depicting a rare sense of the tension of eroticism, as well as death.

With Angie masturbating in the shower and fooling around in the backseat of a cab, during the first twenty minutes of the movie, I could anticipate all sorts of sexual adventures.

During the past year and a half I have been working on a novel entitled *An Erotic Priority, A Sexual Love Story*. Sometime last year I had written a chapter that concerned a close encounter between two lovers in the backseat of a cab. Purely as business I figured I should see *Dressed To Kill*. You understand.

Man, was I suckered.

First of all, the erotic sequence in the backseat of the cab lasts for all of thirty seconds screen time. It ends with Angie throwing her head back, starting to scream in orgasm, as the soundtrack cuts blaringly to automobile horns raising a raucous ruckus on the streets of the city. Benny Hill may be able to spoof the cliched film substitutions for sexual penetration and climax, but I have the distinct impression that DePalma was serious here. I expected the next shot to show us a roller coaster plunging down its tracks. That would have been as clever.

Angie's pickup appears to be a sexual magician. He reaches up her dress, glides his hands between her nyloned thighs and removes her panties. I do not recollect the man removing her pantyhose before performing this trick. Even if I missed it, and I don't think I did, then why, when he pulls her panties off her feet, is she still wearing her high heels?

Maybe Doug Henning could add this to his bag of tricks. It'd be a sensation in Peoria.

When the man's head glides down out of view we are then supposed to get the idea that he is trying out his cunnilingus excercises. And in less than thirty seconds — by golly! — it works!

Thirty seconds hardly seems to count as an intensely erotic film moment, no matter how you play it, unless you are aroused within seconds and can climax that quickly. Talk about premature ejaculation!

Sorry about that, Brian.

I have read that 9 minutes were cut from *Dressed To Kill* in order to avoid an X-rating. Angie Dickenson has been quoted as saying that when *Dressed To Kill* is released in Europe, with the 9 minutes intact, the movie will be the first porn film she has ever made. Maybe Angie's disappearing pantyhose is explained in the missing footage. I assume, in standard fasion, that it was the sexuality that was scissored to avoid the X-rating. Seeing women being mutilated with various bloody special effects, such as their throats, wrists and other portions of their bodies slashed is not considered obscene.

There's something sick about that kind of criterian, gang.

I have heard that Mr. DePalma claims that *Dressed To Kill* works better than Hitchcock's *Psycho*, since after Janet Leigh meets her death in the powerfully effective shower sequence (edited with exquisite skill by Hitchcock), Psycho has only bland characters to carry on the proceedings. DePalma figures, I guess, that he has rectified this weaknesses in his film.

After Angie is hacked up with a straight-edged razor, in payment it would seem for her extra-marital dalliance. The central character becomes DePalma's real life wife, Nancy Allen. Nancy plays Liz Blake a $500-a-night-hooker who is a witness to Angie's murder. Nancy is cute, but even dressed in black nylons, garter belt, and black bra she never convinced me that she was a $500-a-night-hooker in the Big Apple. DePalma's other lead character in the latter part of the film is Angie Dickinson's son, Peter (played by Keith Gordon). Peter wants vengeance even if his stepfather doesn't. Conveniently he is an electronics expert who can bug police headquarters or set up elaborate time controlled movie cameras outside his dead mother's psychiatrist's office.

How about that?

Let's backtrack and start at the beginning.

Angie plays a frustrated housewife, Kate Miller, whose husband (Mike Miller) is only around in the movie when she's alive. DePalma opens the film by showing their expensive house and taking his cameras inside where we see the husband shaving whilst Kate takes a shower and masturbates to relieve her frustrations. Somehow this act seems artificial, and it is never erotic. I could believe Kate masturbating if her husband wasn't in the room where he could turn his head any moment and see her. Being the unresponsive, selfish, ignorant lover that he is, he would certainly not be sympathetic to what she is doing. Later, in bed, we see him on top of Kate, thrusting into her while discreetly covered by a blanket. He tucks his head into her shoulder and never looks at her. When he is finished, he rolls off, pats her on the head, and goes to sleep.'

I guess no one could think of any words for him to say. Maybe they'd have to pay him more if they gave him a speaking part that day. The other performers get to speak some lines. Considering the delivery and the plot inconsistencies the performers have to cover, the guy who plays Kate's husband should be

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In Dressed to Kill a woman's sexual desires (a rape fantasy, in the sequence excerpted above) are used to set up the story of a mad killer stalking a defenseless victim

glad he only had one scene where he had to say anything.

Angie goes to see her psychiatrist (played by Michael Caine) who also has very few lines of dialogue, but does better by them than the others. Kate makes a pass at Dr. Elliot, but he tells her it is not worth the risk to his marriage to play around with her.

Angie goes to the Metropolitan Museum to look at the paintings and give the audience the idea that this is an arty movie and high class to boot. I understand they weren't able to film inside the Museum when they needed to shoot the scenes, so DePalma filmed elsewhere But it really doesn't matter. The Museum sequence is a microcosm of all the myriad ways in which DePalma misinterprets Hitchcock's masterful, unique storytelling talent.

In *Psycho*, Hitchcock has long periods without dialogue, where only the images and sound effects tell the story. The difference between DePalma's silent sequential in the museum is that the characters in *Psycho* are not involved in any social contact, it is natural that they would not be speaking at such a time, and the effect never calls attention to itself. DePalma's silent storytelling, on the other hand, constantly calls attention to itself, and appears awkward, unnatural and finally artificial.

Angie looks around the museum. She sees a young couple. The guy grabs the girl's ass. They move off. She looks at pictures. Silence. She sees a man, woman and child standing far off. They are scolding the child but we can't really hear them for some reason. Silence. The child sneaks off. We hear the sounds of her shoes on the tiles. But if we can hear that tiny sound, why couldn't we clearly hear her mother scolding her? A man sits beside Angie. She looks at him appraisingly. We can see she is thinking about the chance of picking him up. She thinks better of it, turns away. He looks at her. He looks away. Cat-and-mouse sex games at the Met. Angie makes up her mind to talk to him, turns towards him. He is gone. She goes in pursuit, walks right by him. She has dropped her glove back at the bench. She starts back, catches a glimpse of the man going through a doorway. She takes on the chase again. The music goes nuts with tension now, but still no voices are heard (Remember this is a silent sequence, only the sounds of footfalls and music are allowed). Angie returns for her glove. She can't find it. She walks about the museum. Suddenly a hand, holding Angie's glove, grips her shoulder This is apparently supposed to shock us. Well, if not us, then Angie. She is startled, runs off from the man she has been chasing, who stands in the background mouthing words we cannot hear. We can hear Angie's shoes though, clacking away in flight.

The lack of dialogue continues thoughout the pickup, the cab ride to the man's place, Angie's awakening after a lovemaking session and her slipping back into her clothes while the man sleeps, her discovering a doctor's notification what this man she has just been sexually engaged with has VD (the one plot-twist that works in this entire sequence, in that it comes unexpectedly and provokes a nervous laughter), her leaving the room, and her entering an elevator where a figure in a blond wig and huge sunglasses slashes her to death with a razor blade.

The refusal to allow anyone to speak might save DePalma, who also scripted the movie (if it can be called scripting), from having to delineate his characters or to depict the manipulations, compulsions, fears and desires that such a sexual tryst might have for a middle-aged, middle class woman. It's easier not to have to deal with a human being rejecting her lifetime or even to develop the man who picks her up. Furthermore, in such a public place, it is not only absurd, but artificial to insist that voices are not heard, even though mouths are opening and lips are moving.

Sorry about that, Brian, but Hitchcock did it better. Such mismanaged mimicry only makes one aware that we will not be treated to any new classic Hitchcock scenarios.

Artifice seems to be DePalma's strongest point, but it's not an asset.

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As if running from a bewigged killer wasn't enough, $500-a-night-hooker Liz Blake (Nancy Allen) is threatened by a gang of subway toughs

When the bewigged killer steps aboard the elevator with Angie, he moves threateningly. The doors close.

"What's this?" I thought. DePalma isn't going to linger on Angie's brutal death? He isn't going to revel in gashed flesh and flowing blood? He isn't going to lovingly photograph the straight edge razor blade strained red? Sure enough, after cutting to another hallway where we see Nancy Allen (as high-class hooker Liz Blake), standing with a Wall Street client, DePalma then brings us back inside the elevator. That way we can see the razor whack open a fake arm that supposedly belongs to Angie (but looks just like what it actually is), and slash her face. That way they can show plenty of blood for the crowd that gets off on that sort of thing and make sure that a slow box-office summer doesn't affect either Filmways or DePalma's bank accounts.

Sorry about that, Brian.

Afterwards DePalma lets dialogue intrude on his story once more. The police question the hooker. She's going to be blamed for the murder if she doesn't produce the real murderer. The sound in this police sequence reminds me of the tinny studios that old X-rated movies would use when they would turn on the sound for the expository sequences leading to the next tumble on the bed, floor or ground. The actors' delivery is as flat and as hollow as most of those porn stars who are much more comfortable when they are doing what they are really getting paid to do, which is getting on with it.

Sorry about that, Brian. Maybe it *was* better when you kept everything silent.

With Angie dispatched, and her husband curiously absent once he learns about her death from the police lieutenant, *Dressed To Kill* gets down to basics. The basics, from what I can tell is, "How ludicrous can DePalma make this movie and still have the audience gobble it up?"

Let me give you one sequence that points out how ludicrous the situations are in this movie. I won't even discuss the dream sequence that DePalma pulls at the film's conclusion. Forget that. Just try to follow this chain of events that happened midway through *Dressed To Kill*.

The killer in the blond wig with the huge sunglasses is named Bobbi. Bobbi carries the straight-edged razor wherever she goes. Bobbi decides to kill the hooker, Liz. Liz is walking the streets at night. She sees someone who looks like the killer. Fearful, she hops into a taxi. Behind her, the killer hops into another cab. Liz tells the cabbie to take off, that she is being followed. A hectic cab chase ensues across busy Manhattan streets. Liz has the cabdriver run a red light. The cab with the killer runs the light also. On the spur of the moment Liz tells the cabbie to pull over and let her off at (if I remember correctly), 59th Street and Columbus Circle. Liz hops out of the cab and flees down the subway steps. The killer gets out of her cab and starts to pursue Liz, but when she reaches the cab Liz has vacated, the driver shoves open the door and knocks her into the gutter, whereupon we discover — surprize! — that this isn't the killer at all but a policewoman keeping tabs on her. Okay. I'll buy that, even if the policewoman just happens to look like a twin for the razor killer Bobbi.

But wait!

Liz, meantime, runs down into the subway station. She looks around. Guess who she spots? You got it! The real killer in the wig and sunglasses! Bobbi! Now would someone tell me how the hell Bobbi knew old Liz was going to be at that train station after that hectic, tire screeching race across the city? Was she riding in a third cab, or what? Okay, let's say for argument's sake that somehow we can buy such an absurd contrivance. Liz hops over the turnstile into the train station. No one says, "Boo!" to her about it. As Liz runs downstairs onto the train platform, Bobbi dutifully buys a token from the Transit Authority. On the platform Liz plays it real smart and goes way up the end of the tunnel. She peers around the girders. She can't see the killer. She nudges up against a few black guys standing around. There are five of them. The five black guys take one look at Liz and decide, immediately, en masse, that they want to rape her blond ass.

Are you still with DePalma, Bunkie?

Luckily a train pulls in. Liz jumps on. A guardian of the law is in that particular car and Liz tells him how the guys tried to jump

"As long as you have the requisite amount of spurting blood, anything is okay." Is **Dressed to Kill**, with its brutal treatment of women and its bizarre attitude towards sex, a legitimization of the snuff film?

her. He looks out: No one there. The platform is empty. The train pulls out. Now we see that Bobbi is standing with the straight-edged razor in hand between the cars of the train, looking in at Liz. The cop gets off at the next stop. Guess who shows up next? As soon as the train takes off again in come the five black guys and they start chasing Liz's blond ass again. She runs from car to car. But wait! Now wait a doggone minute! Wasn't the killer waiting in the next car just a moment ago? I coulda swore! Well, for some reason the killer has moved down several cars and finally Liz runs smack into Bobbi and the razor. The black guys figure that Liz's blond ass ain't worth getting cut up and they take flight. Bobbi is slow on the draw with ther razor, but it still looks like Liz has had it! How can she be saved? The killer is stronger than her and she's defenseless. She's all alone on a hostile train. Well, not quite all alone.

You'll never guess who comes to the rescue. Why, no kidding, or maybe DePalma *is* kidding, it's Angie's son to the rescue with a can of mace! I sat there shaking my head, in disbelief.

I have spent the past weeks structuring a horror series for Warren magazines called *The Mist*. One of the important factors in writing horror material is to make the horrendous acts plausible. When normal characters are swept into abnormal gruesome events they must react logically. The contrivances should at best, or kept to a minimum and when used, should be as unobtrusive as possible. Obviously when you are paid a lot of money to write a film script, this criterion isn't considered important. It's only the pretty pictures that are important, nothing else.

As long as you have the requisite amount of spurting blood anything is okay. But spurting blood is not a natural equation for suspense or even shock, it is merely ugly, unpleasant and distasteful. I suppose for some it isn't. This senseless brutality toward women, with its questionable linkage with sexuality, when it is presented in a film by a major movie company is the legitimate form of the snuff film genre, although the studios do not want anyone to mention that.

Another film that combines sex and bloodletting is Bob Guccione's *Caligula*. In Manhattan, folks line up at the box office and pay $7.00 a person so that they can view castrations and disembowelments along with some inserted sex scenes. It's a new wrinkle on titilation. The odd situation here is that the normal porn film houses are right down the street, selling non-violent sex for $5.00, and yet I have the feeling that few of them would venture through those portals. *Penhouse* magazine's publisher released *Caligula*, which gives it an air of respectability among the upper East Side sect. They can pretend that *Caligula* is daring artistic achievement. This film is not really about sex, see. It is about the downfall of the Roman Empire. It has significance with a capital "S." Rip that man's testes off! See how degenerated?

In the long run, what does the audience end up paying all this extra money for? The sex? They'd be better served by *Debbie Does Dallas* or even a censored version of *Deep Throat*, Violence? They can see that in much greater quantities with such schlock features as *Mother's Day*, *Prom Night*, or any of the blood-bath features that are always showing along 42nd Street.

One thing for sure: if the people keep paying $7.00 for the likes of *Caligula*, or $5.00 for DePalma's *Dressed To Kill*, they'll get more of the same kind of irresponsible, illogical films, but at higher prices.

And that, Bunkie, is the real horror!

DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS

Ahhh! The comic fanzines.

They have a bizarre symbiotic relationship with the comic books they claim to analyze. They are printed, for the most part, on the same quality toilet paper as the comics they depend upon for survival.

When I first intended to make a few comments about the general state of the fanzine business, he tried to caution me. It was fine with him if I wrote the piece, but he suggested it might be wiser if I waited awhile. Mark is aware of the hostility and insecurity of certain publishers in this curious field. The increased competition that had occured within the past two years has aggravated this situation. In the past, these editors and publishers have more or less had the market to themselves, and they could issue their pronouncements without much fear of contradiction, unless the people attacked, protested within the pages of their magazine. Why how convenient! If the comic professionals responded to their little snipes and prods, it helped sell their magazine. And not only that, it also gave them a certain validity to the general readership that the fan magazines were a part of the comics industry. Some of these publishers, just like some of the comics corporations, are quite ferocious about promoting their image, and like fox terriers, they rip and chew at anyone who might add some varying shades to their self-described images. The animosity of a few fanzine publishers and editors is equaled only by the anger of the professionals they attack and set at each other's throats.

Oh, what a merry thing to have happen within the pages of their magazines! Who could question their editorial practices?

Mark was aware that I had a new book coming out in July called *Detectives, Inc.* He cautioned that if this article should offend some of the people who produce some fanzines it could result in some negative reviews of the book. A form of retaliation, you might say. Well what the hell, they can get you for a lot less than that, if you are on their list. But I did understand Mark's advice. On the other hand, I hoped to stay beyond this vendetta syndrome that sometimes (Not all times!) undermines the fanzine market. I did want to make a few comments that were only personal reactions, and write them in a place where the deck is not stacked. I felt that it was better to write about these publications before any commentary or critiques arrived on *Detectives*, so that it would not result in claims that it was only a bad review that had sparked the piece. Now, this article may appear after any reviews since it is being written several months in advance of its publication. Whatever the case, positive, negative or non-committal reviews, I wanted to make a few observations for the general comic audience that are not normally expressed outside the industry. I felt that if I waited to set those views at a later date, the points might be overlooked as simply being complaints from a writer's battered ego.

Some vindictiveness does exist in the fanzine market. This abuse of print does not happen all the time, and most fanzine writers are not guilty of such practices. But there are a few who use the power of the printed page as an assassin's weapons. These few elitists have all of the assassin's qualities when they sit down to play. A few of these folks do it as surely as the IRS collects taxes every year.

I think it gives them a misguided sense of power. Perhaps they feel that since the comic book world is such a small one, they can truly affect whether or not a person gets work in this industry, or perhaps, at times, it is simply enough to know that they got under a writer/artist's skin. Aim for the ego! You'll kill 'em every time!

I do not want to make the mistake so often found in some fanzines, and that is the omission of clarifying their accusations. Here is one example of an editorial abuse of print. Awhile back some folks were upset with Doug Moench. The story goes that when these sterling fellows found themselves short of material for an upcoming issue of their magazine, with an imminent deadline nipping at their heels, one of the darling lads in a position of authority phoned one of their reviewers. This charming chap requested some reviews and one of his flunkies added in what was supposed to be a humorous fashion, that it would be nice if the reviewer could knock a few Doug Moench books, since they already had Moench mad at them. The type of "humor" must provide chuckles somewhere in the deep recesses of these charming chaps' brains. The reviewer declined the invitation, "humorous" or otherwise. But who knows? Maybe there were other reviewers that would be more willing to go along with the joke, to "get" the offending writers or artists who did not submit to the magazine's indictments.

I hear their protestations now! "It really was only a joke! Gee whiz you're making a big deal out of nothing! We didn't *really* mean a Doug Moench book should be panned unless the reviewer really felt that good ol' Doug deserved to be panned!"

Uh huh. I'm sure. I am just as sure that Doug isn't the only professional to have had "humorous" jests made about their power of the press, the "we'll get you in print" one-liner they figure someone must find hilarious.

Most of the time the distortions and misconceptions conveyed in this type of magazine is not deliberate. I am sure the misuse of their platform rises from an ignorance of an industry they know little about and have never worked in. It also seems that they sometimes try to convey to their readership and contributors that their magical publication is a gateway into the whacky world of comics.

They are the knowledgeable ones, with powers of discernment far beyond that of mortal men.

Um hum. Sure. But only if they have been born on the planet Krypton. For all I know, maybe some of them think they were and have come to Earth to whip the comics industry into shape.

Some of these publishers and reviewers (a small percentage to be sure) seem to expend some effort to convey this elitist position. I have the impression that they would like their readers to believe that they have superior acumen in dissecting the comic medium.

The fact is they don't.

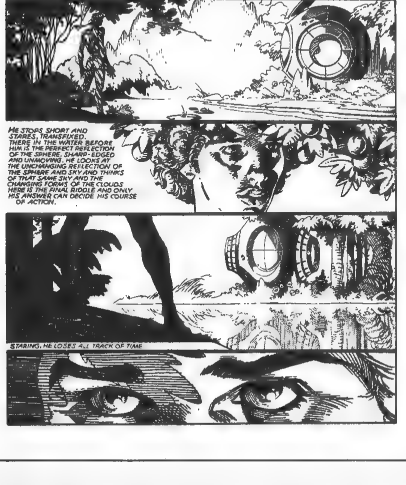
They don't know any more about producing a comic book or about contending with the logistics of an individual work than Brooke Shields does. They have never had to consider what story elements must be considered for inclusion or omission when working on a monthly or bi-monthly series, or even the difference between a book that appears monthly and a book that appears only six times a year. Such a factor demands many different considerations. They have never worked in the mainstream of the industry where a writer must keep track of all the different series he is working on. One book is in the process of being penciled. Another book is being lettered. A third in being sent out to a colorist. A part of one book may be passing through the production department's hands, and subject to another half-dozen editorial persuasions. As well, new issues for the series must be in the plotting stages, and finished script pages are long overdue. These folks who pass themselves off as experts on this illustrated field have no special insight into the mechanizations of the medium. They have never run the guantlet of differing editorial wisdoms and idiosyncracies in an effort to present something that is not closely aligned with accepted procedure; and further they are mostly ignorant of the act of collaboration between artist/writer/letterer/colorist, or even of the difficulties in arranging the scheduling of such a project so that all the people will be available to do their respective jobs.

And these reviewers/editors have at times, given the impression (either consciously or unconsciously) that they have paid their dues, simply because they cover the news of the industry or interview some of the people involved in it.

Now reviewers who are honestly expressing their opinions on what they like and dislike are fine. They state their reasons for the rest of us to appraise, and that is as it should be. I have tried to follow this rule when regarding the work of Stephen Spielberg and Brian DePalma. If I felt a situation was illogical, I tried to present an example of that flaw. Using that example, the reader can make up their own minds as to whether or not the film was illogical. If I felt that a film like *Dressed To Kill* contained an unhealthy combination of sex and sadism I tried to explain why I felt that way.

But some comic reviews don't give comics creators that chance. They make pronouncements. Recently a reviewer made some off-handed comments about Craig Russell's *Night Music* book. He claimed at one point that much of the art was "beautiful" but "wasted." That made my head reel. Now what did he mean by that? He gave no examples, merely made the declaration that Russell's work was beautiful but still a "waste." Since we do not have a bountiful amount of beauty in this industry, I am not sure any bounty can be wasted. Perhaps he is a scholar on the subject of beauty and waste. He does not supply any credentials so we may never know. I assume that his remark pertains to Craig's storytelling, although he never makes the point clear. The reviewer seems to sound knowledgeable at other people's expense. Not only is Craig a victim but so are the readers who have not seen his work.

I can understand that the man has no idea of how Craig Russell works. I can understand that this man has not spent a day, or a week, or even a month considering what technique, what panels should or should not be on a single page, what composition will best deliver the impact that will serve the story best. Craig Russell has. He has given that time and ener-


CURIOSITY DRIVES HIM TO WHERE HE HAD LEFT THE MACHINE. HE HAS NEVER APPROACHED FROM THIS DIRECTION BEFORE AND ALMOST THERE FINDS THE WAY BARRED BY A SMALL POOL OF SILVER WATER.
HE STOPS SHORT AND STARES, TRANSFIXED. THERE IN THE WATER BEFORE HIM IS A PERFECT REFLECTION OF THE SPHERE, RAPT, EDGE-ON AND UNMOVING. HE LOOKS AT THE UNCHANGING REFLECTION OF THE SPHERE AND DRY AND THINKS OF THAT SAME SKY AND THE CHANGING FORMS OF THE CLOUDS HERE, A FOAM, MIDDLE AND ONLY HERE, AN ANSWER TO A DRIVE. HIS COURSE IS ACTION.
STARING, HE LOSES ALL TRACK OF TIME

280 Stockbridge
Buffalo, N.Y. 14215
Oct. 7, 1975

To: JUNGLE REACTIONS
Marvel Comics Group

Dear Dan and Bill,

Don McGregor, you are the most unique writer working in the comics field today. No one writes stories like you — no one comes even close. I've never written you a letter before, but not from lack of admiration. More likely, lack of articulation. Most of the letters you print are almost as poetic as your scripts. What could I hope to add to them? So I've remained silent. Until now.

First, I'd like to mention that your "Panther's Rage" was a stunning achievement. At the completion of the series, I took the time to read the entire thing over a few days (one sitting would've been impossible). I was surprised how well the novel held together. Reading the issues two months at a time was not advantageous to the conceptualization. These were some of the most literate comic books I have ever had the pleasure of reading. To hell with those people who say the best comics are the most terse comics. Boy, they must abhor your stuff. To me, the best comics are the ones that work, while most writers can't pull off using as much text as you do (Stan Gerber can, and has on occasion), it works when you write your stuff since the Lorraine days, and could. Jim put together a summer reprint special thing but your best stories. I bet you'd like that, too.

And now we have, as the cover so correctly proclaims (a rarity for covers) "An ALL-NEW Black Panther EPIC!" The Black Panther vrs. the Klan! Although you never called 'em the Ku Klux Klan, we all know who you're talking about. (Although I thought it was kinda chicken to call 'em the "Clan" on the cover. Oh well.) The penultimate embroidment of racial hatred vrs. the level-headed, fair minded

comics. I think that this series will work better with any of your other black characters. Cage and the Falcon will be more of that than universal concept. Nothing up the possibility for a great deal of conflict, but it makes the menace all the more terrifying is dealing with a hate group that actually exists. You're not fighting Hate-Monger, the Sons of the Serpent, all the myth of the Klan: now you're going to the

dealt with, universal themes in universal interpretation. I was no longer aware that there was a comic in stark contrast, this new series is bound to be one of my all time favorite times, even better than when it is only meant to give one identity " comic books.) It's a nice touch having the Lynne household; how often did Monica and Tchalla in the states again. I'm gonna ask, but what the hell I know Power supermen are sleepers. Looking forward to a little more mention of T'Chaka's involvement in Wakanda, but you I think brought in about his gratuitous feminists, and pointing out more the less, your new of reality about them, but I'll return would and quiver 'em a chance to develop. hope you can be sure I'll be clung for (for the world).

Billy Graham [illegible] seem to work as well keep 'em together.

HEMBECK

gy to this medium. I know, because I spent over two years working with this dedicated man. I have seen him take that time and care, not only on stories he created; but on books I did. Now, that Craig has placed this time, energy and devotions into his work does not mean the reviewer must like it, or even feel that Craig made the right artistic decisions, but Craig does not deserve an off-handed, unsupported cavalier dismissal. This treatment is inexcusable, especially when the man has given us beauty in a medium that is sorely in need of it.

Craig has given his talent to this field, and he has added things to it that weren't there before he came. You can like that addition or dislike it, according to your taste. You can criticize on that basis. But you can't presume to be an uneducated expert on the subject during your discourse, and I think this relatively unknown reviewer did that to Craig. I can't help but wonder if this man will ever add some beauty, wasted or otherwise, to the comics.

I remember many of the fan writers from the middle seventies, people who wrote in to many of the books I wrote and expressed their enthusiasm for comics: Mark Gasper, Peter Gillis, Fred Hembeck, Frank Lovece, Dean Mullaney, Kim Thompson, Ralph Macchio, among others. They have all gone into different areas of the related comics field. There were times when they pegged me, good and proper. They would find a flawed aspect of a story that I had not found a way to overcome. They let me know when they felt I had blown it, as well as when they thought I had pulled something difficult off. They did not pretend that they knew the conditions that affect any accomplishment, easy or difficult, in the comics medium. When they criticized, most of the letter writers did it constructively, not destructively. There was not a sense of vindictiveness, or even the desire to make a living off their comments to these books. They made these criticisms, I think, not out of a sense of power or frustration, but out of love for a largely denigrated or ignored medium. When they made a statement, most often they backed it with examples that showed what they meant. From many of the readers, it was evident that the major concern was that the creators of comics should try (and perhaps sometimes fail) to give something new, something more than formula repetition.

A few of the fanzines do express that love, but there are also some that have a love of power and manipulation. They love the attention when writers or artists respond to some malicious tidbit they manage to eke out of an interview or some commentary. As I said earlier, it is good business to get several professionals into a rambunctious quarrel in their

-2-

What was Mourning Pbay to us? She was surely not a convenient symbol for this or that tendancy in us, our libido, our ego, or some other lesson-producing embodiment. She was, instead, the thing that was different from what we were, the enigma, the unknown. The thing that makes everything else a defense against it: the face of a different reality come to live with us. How do we greet it? How can we ourselves. I thought of a young man me from his friends: I thought of in the half-light and making love other be anything but ourselves at e do have to face it. We are always me pressed in out, decided what this e was would rather deny it altogether

The fire played games with our faces, trying to guess just who it was that we were. At times, we weren't sure ourselves: nor were we sure of the when or the where or the how, but of course, fire, by its nature, cares little for those things. I looked at the fire then. It seemed enough.

Around me were figures, blessed with the warm affinity that stone has for fire, but without stone's promise of solidity. Apparitions, ghosts, yet without their promise of mutations. Betrayals, treacherous memories, then. Failed visions.

I spat into the fire, which I thought a very Conanesque move.

"Aren't you going to say anything?" I asked my companion.

He scowled at me.

"Come on, this is at your instigation, remember."

"I'm willing to be a party to your literary fantasies, Gillis. You don't have my dialogue down. I don't talk like that."

"So uncomfortable about people putting words into your mouth, the way you do to your characters, eh? "aides, it's too late, you're stuck. You're part of this now. Always were."

He raised his eyebrow in what he thought was his "don't-mess-wit'-me" expression, pointed a finger at me across the flame, and then decided the better of it, and sat down on his haunches.

How long was it, really, since we last sat around this fire? Was it the same one? Probably: it is a sense, all fires are the same, much in the same way that mandala's mirrors are the same. It is they that demonstrate that everything else is always different.

It was different, though, the last time since that first time. We'd met in this fiery circle, the shining of creative reflection on both our brows. Mate-blood-brothers, or blood-mates, or whatever the Faveemen. Don was a formidable stranger to me then; now he's a formidable friend. But in a certain sense, it always came back to this circle of fire, wherein were created these visions. No matter where, or who we were.

"I wanted,"he said,"just now, to touch these faces, these bodies as I did a long time, to tickle them, hug them long, and to make them cry. Did you know that there's a secret motion of the hand over a special part of the body, much like tickling, only it causes sorrow?"

"No."

"I found it out for myself when I touched myself, and found something not responding when it was supposed to. The saddest feeling in the world, Gillis. Your self fallen out of love with you."

"And now it's a similar feeling, isn't it? These figures that you can't move any longer."

"Something like that."

"It's funny. To you, they're intractable, like rough hewn rock. To me, they're vaporous. Even a single death is always different to each person. It's never the same for any of us."

"What did it begin? Their death, I mean. It was back in the Okefenokee Swamp, January, 2020. I thought back on Mourning Prey. Somehow, with her, Death set in, for them, for me. We didn't bring it. It was an intrusion of other forces)—but somehow it meant something—

"What did it mean?"

"Wait a second—you're not supposed to be able to—"

"If you can write my dialogue, the least I can do is read your goddamn thought balloons!"

"OK, all right." I turned from the fire, to look at the dim face of Killraven, whose face now was almost totally in the mercy of the firelight.

In a way, it was the mirror image of what was happening now: A new way of being born, a new possibility for growing, different for each of them, or us, as opposed to this new way of dying and of seeing dying.

2A, avenue de st.Clément
34000 Montpellier, France
April 23, 1976

To Don McGregor

Dear Don,

I just read the following laconical bit of news in TCR : "Jack Kirby is now writing and drawing the BLACK PANTHER strip."

I am amazed that one of the book's selling poorly had been flying around for some time, and I know you have been running onto problems free within the bullpen on account of the book, but this is worse than anything I've imagined.

Whoever was responsible for tearing you off what I think was your favorite book, and one of the worst artistic rapes ever to be perpetrated in comics.

If cancellation is death, this is indeed the wash-faced fate worse than it.

Don, I, as well as many others (who will undoubtedly deluge you with letters of sympathy), want to thank you for what you have done with the Black Panther in the last three years. You have shown both the strengths and the fans the potential inherent in the comic book, and have produced, or rather created one of the truly innovative and deep series which has consistently been one of the few comics worth close inspection.

Thank you for T'Challa, Monika, Taku, W'Kabi, Venome, Killmonger (not -raven, damnit, -monger!), Kanis, M'Yumbak, Karuta, Baron Macabre, King Cadaver, Lord Karaaj, Malise, Tayete and Kasibe, Kevin Trahlood, the Lyrans, and all the others whose existence as such may now be ended, but who will relive every time any one of the books in the series is reread. To me, they're more real than most people I know...

Sometimes I don't think this medium deserves you. But I'm very glad you're still hanging in there. Good luck with DEATHFLIGHT, good luck with KILLRAVEN, and I sure wish your artistic integrity were catching, there are a lot of people who could do with it.

I think I'm speaking for a lot of people...

Kim Thompson

A sampling of some of the letters which never saw print that were written to Amazing Adventures and War of the Worlds during the Dauntless One's tenure at Marvel Comics in the mid 70's. All of the letter writers have since entered the comic field in one way or another. The unsigned 2 page Killraven "short story" is Peter Gillis' analysis of the Mourning Prey sequence of the McGregor-Russell War of the Worlds epic

letters pages. It boosts circulation. If some statement is on the borderline of being libelous, what the hell, most of those writers and artists don't have enough money to go out and hire themselves, then the only place they can damn well do it is in the pages of their magazine. What a goddamn Catch 22! Beautiful!

It reminds me at times, of the kind of gut instinct that must be required to work for *The National Enquirer*.

Now, in some of these magazines you will read wild statements that are taken as fact, although no one, as far as I know, has ever made any effort to check out the item's validity. This casual approach to the facts is another *Enquirer* trait. If their fanzine projects should ever fold, it might be possible for some of these folk to ease into a good position with that paper.

This is a strong indictment so I will again offer one example as an indicator of this type of reportage.

An article was published recently that compared my work with Steve Gerber's. In the context of the article, it was stated that in my book, *Sabre*, I had created the character of Willoughby as a lampoon of Steve.

Ain't so.

If Willoughby was a lampoon of anyone, it was the Woody Allen film persona which I thought even someone struck in the head by lightning would have realized. To be exact, Willoughby is a much deeper character in my mind than just a lampoon of any one person.

Alas, the writer of this particular article never made the Woody Allen connection. I cannot figure what made him think Willoughby was my way of making a comment on Steve.

After becoming aware of this article I had to write Steve a letter to make sure that he knew that there was absolutely no truth to this claim. I didn't want Steve to think that I had made such a statement to the author.

These are some of the distorted perceptions that appear from time to time in the fanzines. You may think that they are perfectly valid, and that is your right, but there is one distortion (or more accurately, hypocrisy) of which some are guilty that is almost painfully funny. This hypocrisy is in the manner that they treat their contributors, after they have the gall to criticize the comics industry for its shabby treatment of their personnel.

Ask Cat Yronwode how she feels about the fanzines that pay off in a few free copies of their magazine when they print an article. Of course, Cat is not only one who has been a victim of this attitude. Many other writers have helped to pay their publisher's rent, have enabled them to go out to the movies, pay the electric bills, and to cover the expenses for who knows what else; all of this while they do their writing for free. You

know, a few of these enterprising souls may have learned something from scrounging around the comics industry, but it certainly didn't have anything to do with how to write or draw comics.

"We're doing you a favor by publishing their work," is what all their bullshit comes down to.

"If it wasn't for us, you wouldn't have any exposure. If we print your article in our fanzine, why, gosh-a-golly, brothers and sisters, it's possible that the editors in the comics industry will see your name! Yea, verily! And it just may be, brothers and sisters that they'll remember your name and give you the big break into the wide, wonderful, whacky world of comics!"

Well, maybe that's not a direct quote, but you get the general idea.

I've heard that speech in editor's offices all over New York.

But remember this. If they didn't have contributors, they wouldn't have a magazine that pays for all their necessities, or anything else.

* * *

These are only my perceptions, of course. I write them so that you can consider them. None of these statements are written as maxims or with any kind of absolutism. I just wanted to show a few other sides of the coins. To think about, if nothing else.

Some of these statements you may agree with or, others you may not. I wouldn't want it any other way.

And hopefully some of these perceptions have entertained you. All writers face failure and rejection, I guess. It is a natural part of the process, like facing the first blank sheet of paper, and never knowing whether you're good enough to do it. If a few places here and there gave you a chuckle or two, the piece wasn't a complete failure. If it made you stop and consider the situation from another angle, then facing the blank sheet of paper was worth the effort. I'll look forward to reading your responses.

At least *The Comic Times* should not be angry. I mean, look at the length of this sucker.

Now if only we could do something about the hobgobblin typos in *The Comic Times*, everything would be hunky-dory.

Oh, oh! No offense, people.

I suppose there are certain circles where I won't be forgiven for having made mention of these excesses and distortions, but I hope the words will be taken as constructive criticisms and that these distortions will be corrected, especially in connection with the fanzine writers and their rights.

The fanzine market as a whole can become more responsible in its reportage, a bit more compassionate and articulate in their reviews, and fairer to the people who fill their pages with words and art.

As well, I feel that I should make mention of the many fine fanzine publications. There are many that are noteworthy. Dave Sims *Cerebus*, is more entertaining and more clever than nine-tenths of the parody magazines sold on the mass market magazine racks. Kitchen Sink's *Will Eisner's The Spirit* reprint magazine presents both old and new Will Eisner stories in a classy package. From England, Richard Burton's *Comic Media News* showed a lot of effort and had some of the most interesting ideas for fanzine covers I have ever seen. Richard has moved on to other projects, and the fanzine market is sorrier for it. Rick Marschall's *The Polychromatic Effulgence* provides us with an interesting history of comic strips and R. C. Harvey's *The Reticulated Rainbow* is generally informative and one of the better critical columns. Jerry Sinkovec and Mike Tiefenbacher did us all a wonderful service when they were publishing *The Menomonee Falls Gazette* and *Guardian*. What beautiful, weekly excitement they contained! If neither one of those guys ever do anything else in this medium, they gave us the chance to see Seegar's *Popeye*, O'Donnell and Holdaway's *Modesty Blaise*, Caniff's *Steve Canyon*, Turner's *Captain Easy* and many others. There are a few new reprint periodicals around. They have not quite reached the superior package that Mike and Jerry produced for so long, but they could with your support. One of the papers is called *Chapters*, and while it is printed on something close to regweed at this point, it does offer early Caniff *Terry and the Pirates*, more Segar *Popeye*, and Leonard Starr's *On Stage*, right from its beginning. If you loved comics, check this paper out.

I hope that giving an audience the opportunity to see some of the best work that has been produced in this medium is as profitable an endeavor as the muckraking business apparently is.

That would be truly splendid.

(The proceeding article was written almost 6 months before its publication. Both the editor and the author wish to apologize if any of the material has dated since that time.)

Critics choice: Kitchen Sink's **Will Eisner's The Spirit** magazine (published bi-monthly), the comic strip reprint periodical **Chapters** (published monthly)

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MOVIE REVIEW

FLASH GORDON 1980
THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE BORING

by TOM SCIACCA

When I was eight years old, one of the local New York TV stations used to broadcast entire serials. I sat attentively through *The Mysterious Dr. Satan, King of the Rocketman, Secret Service in Darkest Africa* and even the lackluster *Flying Disc Man From Mars*, but my favorites were the Flash Gordon serials with Buster Crabbe.

Despite the tinker-toy effects (which I spotted as phony right away), I loved *Flash Gordon, Flash Gordon's Trip to Mars* and *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe*. To me, they were more than just movies, they were an integral part of my childhood.

Some years later, I saw a light-hearted, but loving, spoof of those serials. *Flash Gordon* is still one of my favorite fantasy films and Jim Danforth's animated sequences like the Rapist Robots and the Penisaurus are fine examples of that demanding craft.

In Hollywood "nothing succeeds like success," so after the success of *Star Wars*, space movies were suddenly regarded as "hot." Following this trend Dino De Laurentiis, the producer of *Death Wish*, Serpico, the recent King Kong remake, and of many of the early films of Frederico Fellini, purchased the rights to *Flash Gordon*.

Nicholas Roeg (*The Man Who Fell to Earth*) was originally signed to direct the De Laurentiis production, but both he and production designer Ralph McQuarrie left the picture due to artistic differences. De Laurentiis replaced the pair with Mike Hodges (*Get Carter, The Terminal Man*) as director and Dario Donati (Fellini's art director) as production designer. Very little leaked out about *Flash Gordon* during production, except that it was very expensive. *Variety* listed it as the fourth highest budgeted film of all time. In an effort to capitalize on the Christmas season, *Flash Gordon* was released to mixed reviews, in the middle of December.

The film opens from the point of view of Ming the Merciless. By remote control from Mongo, Ming has unleashed a plague of natural disasters including earthquakes and unscheduled volcanic eruptions upon the Earth.

We cut to Flash Gordon (Sam Jones), pro football player in a small airport somewhere in the midwest. Embarking on a modern two engine equivalent of the Ford Tri-motor from Alex Raymond's original story, Flash meets Dale Arden (Melody Anderson) who is a reporter from New York. Soon a strange red glow changes the color of the sky to amber and meteorites begin to bombard the plane. The pilots are killed and Flash takes over the controls of the aircraft. The plane conveniently crashes into the green house of Dr. Hans Zarkov (Chaim Topol) who has built a spaceship to investigate the source of the strange disasters. As Flash and Dale are reluctant to take a trip into space, Zarkov persuades them at gunpoint.

Blasting into space, Zarkov's art-deco spaceship is maneuvered into a vortex (which unfortunately resembles Disney's Black Hole). Crashing onto the blood red planet Mongo, our heroic trio are captured by robed alien figures and are brought before Ming (Max Von Sydow). Ming's royal court has been assembled: the Treemen, led by Barin (Timothy Dalton), Vultan of the

The palace royal. From L—R. Zarkov, Dale, Flash, Barin, Aura and Vultan of the Hawkmen and an assortment of palace guards.

© 1981 Dino DeLaurentis

It's not nice to fool with Emperor Ming! Dr. Hans Zarkov (Chaim Topol) is about to endure Mongo's version of the brain drain

The seductive and promiscuous Princess Aura (Ornella Muti)

Hawkmen (Brian Blessed, who is wonderful) and Thun of the Lionmen. In a severe departure from the original Raymond story, Thun is killed by Ming when he attempts to assassinate the Merciless One. The Lionmen incidentally are characterised as normal humans and are played by black actors.

After dispatching the assassin, Ming decides to take Dale as one of his wives, make Zarkov a slave and execute Flash.

Flash is immediately handed over to the malevolent secret police duo, General Klytus (Peter Wyngarde) and Kala (Mariangela Melato) and is tortured for the fun of it. However Princess Aura (Ornella Muti), Ming's oversexed daughter, is attracted to Flash and not wanting to lose him, she manages to save his life by giving him an antidote for General Klytus' poison gas. The pair takes one of Ming's fighters to Arboria, where Aura can hide Flash with Barin, another one of her boyfriends. Barin, who loves the princess, takes an instant dislike to Flash and twice tries to kill him. Flash survives both traps and then convinces Barin and the rival Hawkmen, to join forces and overthrow Ming. And so begins the rebellion.

Flash Gordon is no *Empire Strikes Back*. The special effects are not as carefully calculated and the musical score (by the rock group Queen) falls flat on its face. The score accentuates all of the wrong points of the film while damaging the dramatic sequences.

Dario Donati's settings and costumes are flawless. However their art deco motif is so spectacular that like some of Ken Adams' massive James Bond sets, they tend to overwhelm both the audience and the cast.

Lorenzo Semple Jr.'s script is fun and witty, but it lacks a certain amount of tension and suspense. There never is a sense of urgency or danger in the film. Everyone seems to have a good time, even though Ming is supposedly attempting to destroy Earth. *Flash Gordon* never achieves the fragile balance of a film like *Our Man Flint*, which although it was humorous at times, managed to convey a degree of tension.

Comic strip heroes have traditionally had a big problem in the transition to the movies. But *Superman* proved that a super hero could be brought to the screen with both class and intelligence. It would have been a gross miscalculation to approach Flash Gordon as a straight film. However the film's humor (which is mostly sexual in nature, concentrating on bondage and sadism themes) might be more appropriate in the *Buck Rogers* TV series and not in a film budgeted at $35 million.

I also found it irritating that Flash played football with Ming's guards (with Dale as cheerleader) in the first scenes on Mongo. It reminded me of the *Batman* TV show (which Semple also wrote) and contributed to the film's uneven pace and mood.

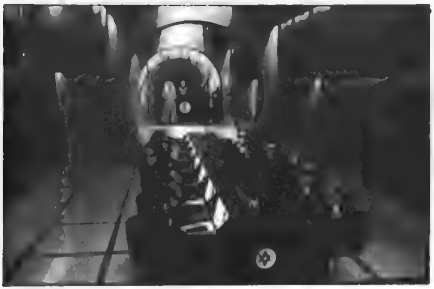
Unfortunately Sam Jones is not very good in the title role. To someone that grew up with Buster Crabbe, Sam is a poor replacement. He never convinces one that he *is* Flash Gordon and

The Hawkmen surprise Ming's troops and wreak havoc aboard the Emperor's ship.

Flash Gordon, quarterback of the New York Jets struggles desperately to right a faltering aircraft destined to crash into Zarkov's green house

© 1981 Dino DeLaurentiis

A ten-gallon [illegible] as they battle for position on a Hawkmen platform suspended in the sky



Next Germany lives! Ming's robotic guard mindscan the skies for invaders.

© 1981 Dino DeLaurentiis

that really hurts the film.

The supporting cast is excellent. Max Von Sydow is a joy. Made up to look like old Charles Middleton (the Ming of the Buster Crabbe serials), Sydow's Ming is a devilish fellow, that does lack a sense of black humor. Then Flash is beating his guards during the fight at the beginning of the film, Ming tells Klytus, "If they lose, have their trainer executed." What a fun guy. .

Likewise, Topol and Melody Anderson are excellent as Zarkov and Dale. Timothy Dalton as Barin, reminds me of Errol Flynn from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Peter Wyngarde as Klytus has the perfect silky voice for a torturer.

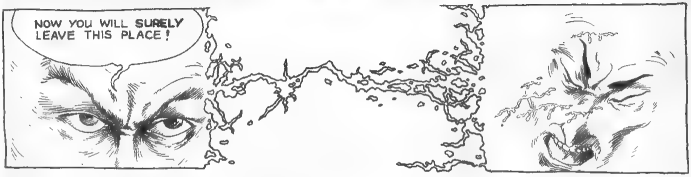
Despite some major flaws, the most glaring of which is Sam Jones' non-performance, *Flash Gordon* is solidly entertaining and a lot of fun. ■

Children-of-the-Stars
©C.VESS.80
DAME MELINOR! IS SHE DEAD!
NO! BUT SHE SOON SHALL BE! TOGETHER YOUR POWERS COME CLOSE TO UNLOCKING SECRETS THAT THE OLD ONES MUST NEVER KNOW!
AS LONG AS THOSE SECRETS ARE PRESERVED THE DEMON LORDS SHALL HOLD DOMINION OVER THIS LAND!
IN THE CHAOS THAT WE SEEK OUR POWERS WILL MAGNIFY BEYOND IMAGINING! THEN EVEN THE OLD ONES WILL LISTEN TO OUR VOICE!

BUT ENOUGH OF THIS... WHA... NO!!
SUDDENLY, FROM ABOVE, A SCREAMING BLACK BLUR OF GRASPING TALONS AND NEEDLE SHARP TEETH HURTLES DOWN UPON THE STARTLED DEMON LORD...

CAUSING THE WAND,
HIS LOCUS OF POWER TO SLIP...
FROM HIS GRASP AND FALL...
INTO DAME MELINOR'S HAND!

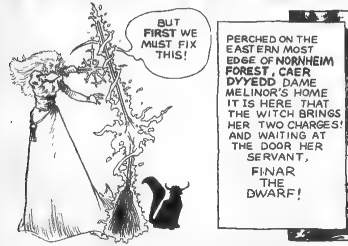
REVIVING THE WITCH WITH RENEWED POWER AND STRENGTH!


NOW YOU WILL SURELY LEAVE THIS PLACE!

GO!
VERY WELL! COME MY PETS, WE SHALL LEAVE! BUT FIRST...

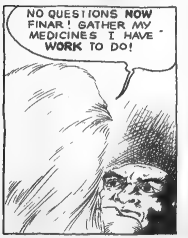
A PARTING GIFT!

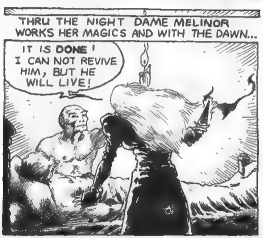
UNNNH!!!
THE RENT IN THE SKY SLAMS SHUT AND THE WIZARD IS GONE, LEAVING ONLY DARKNESS AND DESPAIR...

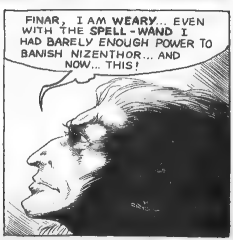


PERCHED ON THE EASTERN MOST EDGE OF NORNHEIM FOREST, CAER DYYEDD DAME MELINOR'S HOME IT IS HERE THAT THE WITCH BRINGS HER TWO CHARGES! AND WAITING AT THE DOOR HER SERVANT,

FINAR THE DWARF!

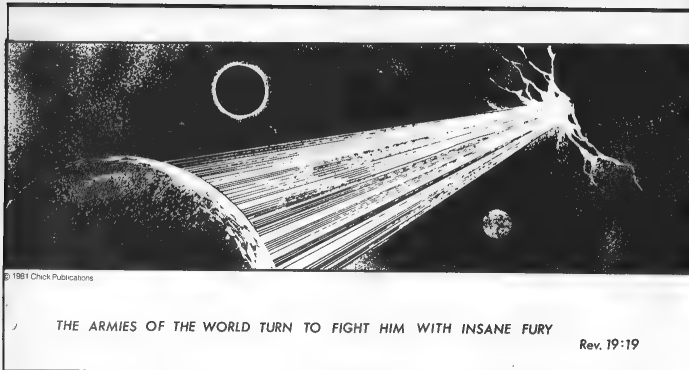






WHILE IN ANOTHER ROOM, BRONWEN SITS DEEP IN THOUGHT!
OUR PARENTS... HOW CAN I MOURN FOR SOMEONE I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER!
THEY SHOULD HAVE BEEN THE ANSWERS TO SO MANY QUESTIONS BUT NOW...
I... I... DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHAT IS IT THAT THE DEMON LORDS FEAR FROM US?
MY BROTHER... HOW IS HE?
HIS WOUND HEALS! BUT THE KNIFES HARM IS FAR DEADLIER THAN ITS SHARP BLADE!
LORD NIZENTHOR WOVE MANY SPELLS INTO ITS MAKING AND THEIR EVIL INFLUENCE LINGERS IN BRAN'S BODY!
ALL MY MAGICS COULD NOT MAKE HIM WHOLE AGAIN!
THEN WHAT CAN WE DO?
I'LL NOT LIE TO YOU, BRAN WILL FULLY REVIVE ONLY WHEN THE DEMON LORD'S INFLUENCE HAS ENDED...
AND THAT WILL BE AT NIZENTHOR'S DEATH!

TO BE CONTINUED...



© 1981 Chick Publications

THE ARMIES OF THE WORLD TURN TO FIGHT HIM WITH INSANE FURY

Rev. 19:19

The Bible in Comics — By Catherine Yronwode

Religion is a touchy subject. If you have one, it is the truth (The Truth) to you and woe be the blasphemer who toys with your beliefs. If you don't have one, all religions seem no more than tales told to children to keep them from crying when their kitten dies. The fables which grow up around the worship of any goddess and god are then no more (or less) than super-hero fantasies — a series of brilliant adventures in a universe as artificial and internally consistant as the ones produced by Marvel or DC. I have no religion. What follows is a look at comic books by those who do.

It is an axiom of the Christian faith that those who practice it are obligated to spread "the good news about Jesus and salvation from sin" to the whole world. This missionary zeal has, of course, been largely responsible for the tremendous growth of Christianity over the last few centuries. The Protestant denominations in particular have devoted considerable effort to reaching people with easy-to-follow versions of the Gospel. In addition to translating the Bible into virtually every known language, Protestant missionary publishers have produced Braille and audio-recorded Bibles for the blind, large-type Bibles for the near-sighted, easy-reader Bibles for the under-educated and, inevitably, comic book Bibles for children. It is the last of these which concern us here, in case you hadn't guessed.

When I began to research the subject of Bible comics, one thing surprised me greatly — although there have been many Christian comics published — such as Al Hartley's *Spire/Archie* series and Chick Publications' *Crusaders*, not to mention at least a hundred different small comic book tracts designed to be left in bus stations and laundromats — there seem to have only been three attempts made, in the entire 45 year history of comic books, to adapt the Bible itself into the sequential art form. Of these three, only two were ever completed. The first Bible comic, and the one most known to collectors, was the notorious EC/National/All-American series, *Picture Stories from the Bible*. The reason it is still remembered with amusement is that William Gaines, son of the title's publisher, Max Gaines, used its existence as part of the defense of his line of horror comics when brought before the Kefauver Committee, which was investigating Frederic Wertham's charge that comic books cause juvenile delinquency. However, *Picture Stories from the Bible* was not an EC title in the way that term is usually used. It was the product of scripter Montgomery Mulford and artist Don Cameron (aided by an impressive number of professional religious people) and first saw print from 1942-1946 in various editions. As recently as 1979 a new hardback edition of *Picture Stories* was published by Scarf Press and the work bids fair to remain before the public eye for many more years to come.

The second Bible adaptation is a much more polished work. Scripted by Iva Hoth, illustrated by Andre Le Blanc and lettered by Ben Oda, this series was originally published in four-page increments designed to be given away in Sunday schools. As time passed (it took Hoth, Le Blanc and Oda sixteen years to make it from Genesis to Revelations) the segments were reduced to three pages each, with the fourth page given over to text material. The publisher of this magnum opus, David C. Cook, translated the individual chapters into 21 different languages, from Swahili to Urdu. A small digest series in B&W was published as some of the more popular portions of the adaptation were completed. These were not simply taken from Le Blanc's line art for the four-color comics — Andre went to considerable trouble to rework the art, punching up the blacks so they would look good without the addition of color. Eventually a three volume paperback set of the collected four-color comics was issued, followed in late 1979 by a one volume hardback edition — *The Picture Bible*.

The abortive third Bible series only made it as far as Genesis 20:26 before running out of steam. It is refered to as "Stories from the Bible," but was actually published by DC in 1975 as the tabloid-sized *Limited Collector's Edition* vol. 4 no. C-36. Sporting a strangely mis-colored Joe Kubert cover (Moses has a process blue chest!) and edited by Joe Orlando, it was beautifully drawn by Nestor Redondo over Kubert's layouts and featured a script by the great Sheldon Mayer. Unfortunately, without a missionary Christian publisher to back it, the project failed for lack of sales and only one volume was ever produced.

How do these Bible comics compare with one another and more importantly, how do they compare with the Bible itself? The answers to these questions are very interesting, and reveal a lot about how Christians view their own beliefs — as well as how they have sought to remove the Wertham stigma from what they believe to be "children's literature."

Broadly speaking, the old EC Bible comic is about on a par with most Golden Age sequential art. The pictures are crude but vigorous, the action excitingly presented. The Bible is a violent series of stories and the author and artist have not censored much of the material they are adapting. The Cook comic on the

other hand, produced after the Wertham furor, is so bowdlerized as to render the source material unrecognizable in parts. There is *NO* violence shown, *EVER*. This leads to some curious, almost laughable lapses in story-telling technique, lapses which are certainly not the fault of the artist (a very good cartoonist-illustrator with years of experience in both comic books and strips) but the result of the scripter's bizarre desire to "clean up" the Good Book so that no Sunday school teacher, PTA member, or little child will have nightmares after reading it. The DC comic, created as the Comics Code began to loosen its deadly grip on the range of expression allowed in the funnies, is by far the most accurate adaptation of the words which actually appear in the Bible. In addition, it is the only one scripted by someone with years of experience in the field of comics. Mayer and Kubert seem to have approached the project as if it were a comic first and the Bible second: there is tremendous attention paid to such niceties as characterization, motivation, page breakdowns and panel layouts. The best way to demonstrate the differences between these three Bible comics and at the same time cast some light upon the peculiar need many modern Christians have to alter the Word of God so that it seems "reasonable" to them is to examine in detail how each comic deals with one particular story. Because the DC book only covers the first part of Genesis, it has to be an early episode — and because violence in comics has always been an extremely sensitive subject, it should be a violent one. The story of Cain and Abel fulfills both these requirements perfectly.

We must begin with the original version, of course, in order to see how the comic books deviate from it. The King James Bible is a standard translation. Here is how the story reads from the beginning of the fourth chapter of Genesis:

> And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

Notice that Cain is the first born, that Cain is the first to propose making a sacrifice to the Lord and that absolutely no reason is given for the fact that God doesn't accept his offering with respect. There is a bare hint that God knows that in his heart Cain is not a very good person — He warns him about his coming temptation ("sin lieth at the door") and predicts that he will succumb — but logically, in terms of good characterization, there has been no forewarning to the reader/believer that Cain, the initiator of the very first recorded worship service in the Bible, would be found unacceptable to the God he serves. It is a shock to the reader's expectations. It seems fickle of God. It seems unfair.

God's rejection of Cain's offering has troubled a lot of Christians. This unease manifests itself in the comic book adaptations of the story. The scripters write as if they *must* find a way to make life's randomity (perceived as God's displeasure) understandable and palatable to small children, and to themselves. It is a hopeless task, and it leads to some very strange results.

Here is the script from the EC adaptation of the fourth chapter of Genesis:

Caption: *Later, when they had left Eden, two sons were born to Adam and Eve — Their names were Cain and Abel.*

Cain: *When I grow up I'll work in a field. I like to see things grow.*

Abel: *I'll have a flock of sheep! I like animals.*

Caption: *And so they did . . .*

Adam: *Cain is a good son! And Abel the shepherd is a fine lad too!*

Abel: *Good day, father!*

Caption: *One day Abel decided to make an offering to the Lord. Cain pledged an offering too, but his heart was not in it.*

Abel: *For God's goodness I feel I should sacrifice a lamb from*

CAIN IS A GOOD MAN!
AND ABEL THE SHEPHERD IS A FINE LAD TOO!
GOOD DAY FATHER!
ONE DAY ABEL DECIDED TO MAKE AN OFFERING TO THE LORD. CAIN PLEDGED AN OFFERING TOO, BUT HIS HEART WAS NOT IN IT
FOR GOD'S GOODNESS I FEEL I SHOULD SACRIFICE A LAMB FROM MY FLOCK. FOR HIM!
O WELL, I CAN OFFER HIM SOME OF MY FRUITS!
I'LL NOT BE OUTDOWN BY MY BROTHER ABEL!
ABEL, YOUR OFFERING IS PLEASING TO ME!
AND WHAT ABOUT MINE LORD?
CAIN SLINKS AWAY
MY BROTHER IS THE FAVORED ONE OF GOD! MY OFFERING IS JUST AS GOOD!
WHY ARE YOU ANGRY, CAIN? IF YOU DO WELL, SHALL YOU NOT BE ACCEPTED?
JUST WAIT!

In this excerpt from **Picture Stories From the Bible** scripter Montgomery Mulford has rewritten the Bible. In Mulford's version Abel not Cain proposes a sacrifice to God. Art by Don Cameron © 1979 Virginia Elaine MacAdie

my flock to him!

Cain: *O well, I can offer him some of my fruit! [thinks] I'll not be outdone by my brother, Abel!*

Caption: *God, looking into their hearts, commends Abel but not Cain . . .*

God: *Abel, your offering is pleasing to me!*

Cain: *And what about mine, Lord?*

Caption: *Cain slinks away . . .*

Cain: *My brother is the favored one of God! My offering is just as good!*

God: *Why are you angry, Cain? If you do well, shall you not be accepted?*

Cain: *[thinks] Just wait!*

In order to make God's "irrational" behavior understandable, scripter Montgomery Mulford has taken it upon himself to rewrite the Bible! In Mulford's version, it is the second born, Abel, who first proposes the idea of offering sacrifices to the Lord and Cain simply goes along so as not to be outdone. Naturally, God sees through Cain's shallow pretense and refuses to accept his offering. Naturally, it makes so much more sense that way. Poor Iva Hoth, who scripted the Cook Bible comic, must have been troubled by the same kinds of doubts. Here is his adaptation of the same passages:

Caption: *Outside the Garden of Eden the land is barren, hot and dry. Weary, alone and frightened, Adam and Eve search until they find a place to make a home.*

Eve: *Remember how beautiful Eden was? If only . . .*

Adam: *Yes, if only we had obeyed God. We must make certain that we teach our children so that they don't make the mistake we did!*

Caption: *So Adam teaches their sons, Cain and Abel, about God.*

Adam: *He made the Earth and everything we have.*

Abel: *I like to think of God giving me my little lamb. How can I thank him?*

Adam: *When you're older, Abel, you can give God the best of your flock. He told us we should make sacrifices to show our thankfulness.*

Caption: *As the boys grow to manhood, Abel plans for the day when he can give his thank offering to God. But Cain thinks only of his crops . . .*

Cain: *[thinks] If Abel gives God a sacrifice, I'll have to offer one too!*

Caption: *God is pleased with Abel's gift. But the grudging spirit of Cain displeases God.*

Cain: *[thinks] Why should God favor my brother? It isn't fair!*

But in this version, the reader knows it *is* fair. Cain is not the originator of the idea of worship, he is just going along so as to appear as good as Abel. Hoth doesn't merely invert the order in which the Bible says the offerings were made: he adds a new twist all his own, the idea that it was *Adam* who told the kids to make the sacrifices in the first place. This is completely in keeping with the middle class values promoted by the middle-of-the-road Protestant churches which presumeably supported Cook's sixteen year effort to adapt the Bible: "Father knows best." The bowdlerization is so complete that one doesn't notice until a second reading that there is no mention of the birth of Cain and Abel. "Where do babies come from" is a can of worms no Sunday school teacher wants opened in his or her lap.

HOW CAN I THANK HIM?
WHEN YOU'RE OLDER, ABEL, YOU CAN GIVE GOD THE BEST OF YOUR FLOCK. HE TOLD US WE SHOULD MAKE SACRIFICES TO SHOW OUR THANKFULNESS.
AS THE BOYS GROW TO MANHOOD, ABEL PLANS FOR THE DAY WHEN HE CAN GIVE HIS THANK OFFERING TO GOD. BUT CAIN THINKS ONLY OF HIS CROPS...
IF ABEL GIVES GOD A SACRIFICE, I'LL HAVE TO OFFER ONE, TOO!
GOD IS PLEASED WITH ABEL'S GIFT. BUT THE GRUDGING SPIRIT OF CAIN DISPLEASES GOD...
WHY SHOULD FAVOR MY BROTHER -- IT ISN'T FAIR

In **The Picture Bible**, Iva Hoth goes one step further than Mulford and has Adam tell his sons to give God the sacrificial lamb. Art by Andre Le Blanc. © 1978 by David C. Cook Publishing Co

The DC Bible is a breath of fresh air after these two distorted versions. Again, from chapter four of Genesis:

Caption: *Time passed into weeks and months and years . . . while Adam tilled the hard, rocky land for food and sustenance. Two sons were born to Adam and Eve: Cain and Abel.*

Adam: *Bring me some water, Eve . . . The sun is hot. I thirst . . .It should be noted that the picture which accompanies this text adds considerably to the movement of the plot: It de-*

cont. on page 90

AUDITION

© 1981 John Warner

Written by John Warner *Illustrated by Rick Bryant*

OVERTURE

((It was Spring when He first observed her descent into the valley. Maiden earth spread like a plush carpet at her feet and those feet were as light as the dawn wind that flurled her raven hair and playfully tossed it across her eyes. She was different, He sensed that. Even with the most promising walker, though, there was always the chance they might not see it through. But not her. He knew. Not her.))

Fren saw her also, that first Spring day Fren too had noticed that she was different, even if his criterion didn't have the same basis. Her legs moved in rhythm too and as gracefully as her arms. Her back arched and rippled in ways that caused Fren to lose his balance and fall whenever he attempted to imitate her. It's hard to be graceful on goat's legs

wind whistling through empty shuttle tubes And she never knew how to fill those spaces.

At those times she would lose herself—in the hills from her window by day, in the stars from her window by night. And mostly in dance.

Clarissa was a dancer, but it was a private and very personal communion with her inner self Still, she had performed publicly. For six years she had studied under Dame Tillson, executing Tchaikovsky at fourteen, Martha Graham at fifteen and Berkhausen a short year ago. People acclaimed her, but they didn't understand. They only saw it from the outside. They didn't feel it. Or maybe they did, but they didn't feel what she felt, dancing in her room, dancing in her mind as she watched the summer green hills from her window. The dance was her special connection. To what, she didn't know. It didn't matter, it was enough that it was there, inside her. She felt a part of it was out there too, somewhere in those lush hills. Part of

cases, the settlement had become too much a part of their blook. There never were any precise "whys" when it happened. The hunters could never reasonably predict when a "turn" might take. It had never really been important for Him. He selected a walker. They either kept going or turned back. Either was a result.

This was different, and He still couldn't fully sort out why. He had heard of this phenomenon amongst the hunters—the one watch where, suddenly, the stakes were more than a mere result factor. Somehow an emotional and psychological investment entered into the watch

In such a case, it had been said, if the walker "turned," the hunter might never hunt again.))

The notes where silver, hollow silver, like the flute that gave them birth. Like the flute, they caught the sunlight and reflected it on the dancer

© 1981 Rick Bryant

Fren could not remember when a human had last come to the valley Mostly the humans kept their distance with the forest dwells—the synths and holoes, fauns and nymphs and centaurs. It wasn't a hostile distance The humans felt superior. Fren supposed they might be right, stopped to scratch a few fleas and then tried to remember what it was he had just been thinking

Fauns have very short memories

First Movement
SPRING DUET

Clarissa had lived in the settlement all her life—17 years. Although she felt that there was more to the world than what one could see to the horizons, it was not until her birthday this year that she was given authorization to be allowed into the hills beyond the settlement. In her younger years it had been strictly forbidden Later, it had only been discouraged. She was told the hills were infested with animals. The animals, some of which were actually humanoid with mutations, knew little of human ways and, in their ignorance, could cause harm.

She was never sure how much to believe, and it especially bothered her that very few people seemed disturbed by these limitations. At their sanctimonious worst, some of her instructors would inform her: "What you seek is within you. The wall around the settlement is not a boundary, but a definition." On the other hand, the wall was all she had ever known, like some immutable law of the universe.

So she stayed and was mostly happy, save for those times she felt yearnings she couldn't understand. There were hollows then, like the

it she had imagined, was just being out there, alone, surrounded by distance, just being And dancing. Not like the settlement, where you only have two options—surrounding yourself with people or with walls. She sometimes melodramatically, regarded the habitat towers as long-fingered hands closing in about her, trying to grasp her too tightly, trying perhaps to strangle her. Oh, why was she not more like the others? She was not unhappy, but they were somehow satisfied

She sometimes felt so very young. And foolish. Yet, other times, she felt much older and very far away

Clarissa felt that way now as she stood on the brink, atop the wooded mound that rose up behind the settlement, overlooking the scooped-out valley below. Behind her, the settlement Before her . . .what? More distance? The animals? Holoes? Synths? What? If she descended, the horizon would prevent any view of the settlement. She had always been surrounding by the settlement, those clutching hands

She paused.

((He noticed her indecision. His fingers toyed absently with His respirator. Partially He felt encouraged. She was seeking enough to face the precipice, but not so foolhardy as to rush right over without asking a few honest questions. She would not be standing there in the first place if she hadn't questioned. But part of him became momentarily anxious. Many crossed that precipice. Some kept going. Many turned back, losing themselves in the routine of the settlement as if they had lost all memory of their former discontent. Lack of courage? Lack of vision? Perhaps in some

Clarissa turned. The distance she might have turned back from . . .this time. But not the music. Not the silver-yet-transparent globes that floated up, snatching lazily at the glimmering streaks of sun and splaying them over the trees.

She followed the music down into the wood where the silver bubbles rose. There, sitting on a stump where he could watch her through the trees, sat Fren. Although she had been told about fauns and other human variants, she still found herself startled to see the small, goat-haunched man with a smile-lined face bent happily over his flute, his eyes peering at her with playful flirtation. The notes continued, always perfectly round, never oblong or oval. The silver bubbles floated up and disappeared in the sky and sun.

"What are you looking so startled about? I'm the one who should be surprised to see your kind this far from the settlement!" Fren slipped the silver flute into a soft woven-leaf slipcase that hung off his belt. The belt itself was woven of long grasses and reeds and was used to draw a thigh-length tunic at the waist. Below that, he stood not quite erect on strong but turned-under legs, thickly furred, with cloven hooves.

"I'm the first human?" Clarissa cocked her head slightly to study Fren better.

"I don't know. Fauns don't remember things too well." He stopped to kick at some fleas with jerking, almost spasmodic motions. Before that, Clarissa had though that Fren seemed inordinately well groomed for an animal.

"Then you are a . faun?"

"I think so. Unless I've gotten mixed up —that's possible too." There was a slight leas-

ing edge in Fren's voice and the flicker in his eyes.

"No. You are! I've seen pictures. We have to study all the animals and H-vanants. It's just that seeing a picture and seeing the real . . .well, it's different. But you are a faun."

"That's a relief." He chuckled mischeviously, enjoying the relative naivete of the human. But she was too much within her own thought to notice.

"Are you real?" Clarissa stared Fren down intently.

Fren smirked. "You mean, am I a synth or a holo?"

"I . . .I meant no offense. I just have to know."

"I'm not allowed to tell you, really." Fren eyed her cautiously. Then his eyes shone gleefully. "Come here."

Clarissa hesitated.

"Come here. It's all right. Touch my face."

"But I . . .that is . . .Well, I was told not to get too close to the animals."

Fren's face lit up all the more. "But am I an animal?" Fren grinned leeringly, winked and pulled the flute out of its case.

"I didn't mean . . ."

Fren raised the flute to his lips, winked again, and began to play. Slowly, one note at a time, like dance steps. With each note, as a shimmering silver bubble rose, Fren took a careful step, making a dreamy slow, gyrating and flirtatious dance about Clarissa. Clarissa watched, more intrigued by observing how one would move on goat legs than anything else. She also felt some confusion as to Fren's present motivations. The dance lasted all of a semicircle around Clarissa, at which point the less-than-graceful faun collapsed and fell clumsily head-over-haunches, creating quite a stir in the dust.

Clarissa broke into laughter. The lampoon of Fren's "dance" touched a warm spot within her. Then, as suddenly, she became concerned that the (animal? creature? person??) might have hurt him/itself. She ran to Fren's side and pulled him over to cradle his head in her lap. She stroked his cheek. Even his sun-browned skin seemed to have a soft, almost invisible layer of downey-like fur. And now, this close, she could smell the woodsy muskiness one would expect to accompany one who lived in the wild.

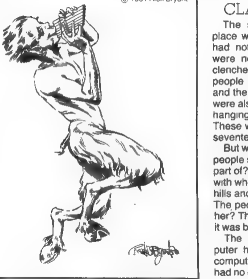
Fren opened his lids. His eyes were rolled back so that only the whites showed. Clarissa jumped just a bit. Fren sprang up gleefully, quite pleased with his simple-minded prank. Fren clamped his flute firmly in his teeth, and taking both of Clarissa's hands, pulled her up. He whirled her blindingly around and around in a mad and frenzied dance. His laughter seemed to bubble inside her head in the same manner his music had bubbled in the air around her, but his dancing disoriented her. Finally he let go and tumbled over himself in absolute delight. She caught herself in mid-fall, re-established her center of gravity, and eased herself upright again.

Fren, whose tunic now resembled a dust rag, brought the silver flute to his sweating lips. His eyes shone. His fingers pressed down on the keys, but it was like a caress. He blew, softly, but long and steady. The note was like the distant howl of a single snow wolf carried on the whispers of a midnight wind. No bubbles rose from the flute, but the breeze answered in the trees overhead. The note continued, grew richer, more resonant, and blended so smoothly with the next note that one could not detect the actual point of shift. A single, pure crystal of silver translucence appeared over his head. The note dropped subtly: a blue face formed on the crystal. Up a fifth; yellow. Flat, then up an octave; violet.

Clarissa shut her eyes; the colors were inside her head as well. The tune was slow, but quite rhythmic. The notes washed cooly over her mind like deep water, which seemed to lap against and be answered by the surrounding hills. She felt enveloped. The melody was playfully and patiently sensual and Clarissa's body responded in flowing, precise motions. The crystal of multicolored interfaces was her partner, extending budding prisms about her. She was a gliding fish in rainbow waters. She was totally lost in her dance, withdrawn within her own center. Then, within all, she heard Fren's voice, but it too was part of the music, in rhythm to the dance.

"Am I real?"

The music and color faded as if cued. Above, the wind still rustled through the leaves.



Clarissa looked down at the shorter Fren, who continued to smile impishly. A sudden crossbreeze snapped her hair across her face where it became momentarily fastened by a film of sweat.

"Are you? Real?"

"How badly do you want to know?"

Fren held out a moist palm on which lay a millimenory circuit disc. It was like all those thousands of others used for information flow in the settlement. They had taught her gen-tech. math, how to move when dancing, but never how to feel when dancing. It seemed so damned out of place here.

What would be on this circuit disc? An exhaustive bio-physical report on fauns? A manufacturer's filed report on construction of faun-model human variant androids? Or a technical datascope on mythological holography? And nothing about the music, about the colors . . .about the dance.

Clarissa reached down and closed Fren's fingers over the disc. "I guess I really didn't want to know after all. And why should I believe that disc if I can't get a straight answer out of you?"

Fren chuckled and scampered off.

Wait! Where are you going?"

Fren stopped to prance in place a moment. He called back. "To my place. My hovel."

"I'll go with you."

"Oh, no, no, no, no! Too soon. I might seduce you!"

"You might try. You're charming, but you're not my type. Why else can't I go with you?"

"Later. Next time. In the summer—you'll be back."

"How do you know?" Clarissa raised her voice seeing that Fren had begun running again.

"It's time for you to get back now!" Fren called back, not even slowing.

"And how the hell do you know that?" And yet, Clarissa supposed, he was most probably correct. She had to descend several hours after hearing the music of find Fren. She would have to walk back those same several hours, but uphill.

Still, the climb back was far steeper than the incline alone would account for.

Interlude
CLARISSA'S DANCE (solo)

The settlement was an entirely different place when Clarissa returned. The settlement had not changed. Clarissa had. The towers were no longer interlocked hands, but fully clenched fists. The towers were drab and the people were . . .well, they were nice and right and the people they had always been. But they were also drab. And disappointing, like window-hangings that had faded and lost their hue. These were not the same people she had lived seventeen years with.

But weren't they the same? Weren't these the people she had never opened up to, never felt a part of? The people she had her yearnings from, with whom she never shared the vision of green hills and night stars from her bedroom window? The people who only saw her dance, never felt her? The same, if the people had lost any color it was because she had recolored them herself.

The computer knew something. The computer had awarded her the outings. But the computer didn't care. It made selections, but it had no personal stake.

She had her first outing. She would be offered two more. If she accepted the third, she would not be allowed to return. Where would she go then? What lay beyond the valley? Clarissa had no answers. But she knew she would go . . .the third time.

Clarissa gazed at the mirrored Clarissa who returned her gaze from across her dance room. Perhaps if there had been some miraculous difference in her, but she was still the same as when she had gone, still posed awkwardly at the edge of the world looking like an adult but feeling too often like a child. This was nothing unique. All her life she had sorted these mirrors for answers to her feelings of separateness. It was just so much more acute now.

Perhaps the most unsettling part of it all was the blend of yearning and anxiety. A small part of her feared that unknown out there, all the more now that it was actually possible to have it.

It was common knowledge, even when she was a small child, that there was an "out there" and that people had been known to venture forth. The rules and specifics of going were kept vague until much later and, in fact, very

few asked questions about it. Sometimes one would notice, maybe after a week, that you were no longer passing someone on your daily routes about the settlement. There were no explanations. You just knew.

But now Clarissa remembered another, whom she met shortly after she began performing. There had been something about him, a look in his eyes, that betrayed the equanimity with which he seemed to blend in with everyone else. Everything he did had such a self-conscious effort to it, defeating (at least in her case) what seemed like a defeating effort not to be noticed. He had been outside. She knew. He had distance in his eyes, and fear. But when she tried to talk to him, he only smiled and acted as any citizen, joking good-naturedly, showing supportive concern when he realized what earnest lay beneath her questions, but providing no answers. And yet his eyes . . .!

She had his eyes now. She shuddered and buried her face in her hands. No, not his eyes, not wholly. She had only had a preliminary outing. Somehow she knew he had been out for his final. Something had made him turn back. Something out there—or something inside him. Whatever it was, she too would have to face it.

She reached over absently and rested the sensor on the wall so that the music, which swelled from no direction in particular, broke the trail of her thoughts. The searching violin strains of Khatchaturian enveloped her like bands of silk, guiding her, turning her, setting her into motion. The music pressed against her from all sides, and left her with a sense of enclosure but not constraint or containment. Her world was full of contradictions now but at least this, this, remained universal. The dance had not faded, but glowed, perhaps more lightly than before. She let go of her sense of gravity and found the natural motion and tide of her own rapture.

Clarissa tried for some time after returning to the settlement to renew her feelings for it. There was nothing to renew. Only in her dance room with its black and mirrored walls could she feel. The dancing brought back colors to her mind, but it didn't tell her why.

"Are you real?"

"How badly do you want to know?"

People mostly left Clarissa alone now—to her room, to her dance. She danced long hours. And wept sometimes.

Second Movement — SUMMER HARVEST

Fren's hovel was small, but adequate, set in the rounded base of a tree of incredible girth. The arrangement was simple—straw and leaves scattered on the floor, a bed of ferns in the corner, a small stone basin to catch fresh rain water and a cauldron over a stone firepit. The tree itself was quite living, maintaining its growth around the hovel. Neither offered conflict to the other.

Clarissa wasn't sure how she found the hovel, nor what it was that assured her it did belong to Fren. Fren was not to be seen and it was getting quite late. In fact, Fren had been conspicuously absent from the wood all afternoon.

She continued to busy herself with the bric-a-brac which lined the hovel. Nervous gestures more than curiosity. She felt uneasy, not like the previous time. It was as if the colors here too had faded just a bit, but they hadn't. And this time it wasn't her, something was wrong. Some deep inner part of her clawed at her, trying to warn her.

"Am I late?"

Clarissa turned, startled, searching.

"Fren?"

There was no one.

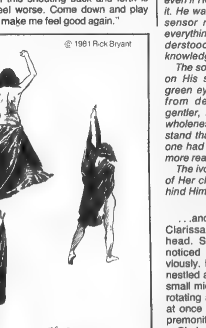
"Up here!"

Clarissa looked up, searching the latticework of branches visible through the hollowed tree trunk. Fren sat just at the edge, leering down, a slight glimmer around him that Clarissa supposed was a trick of the sun.

"Where have you been?"

"Oh, here . . . there. Around. Do you always invite yourself into strange hovels?Can be dangerous, you know."

"Fren, come down here. Something feels wrong and all this shouting back and forth is making me feel worse. Come down and play your flute and make me feel good again."



"There's not a faun I know who could possibly resist trying to seduce you."

"Damn it, Fren, I'm losing my patience. I'm not interested in your insipid sexual games. I want you to come here and play for me!"

Fren's leer faded as his eyes became darker. His mouth twisted uncharacteristically on one side. "O thou queen, the mountains far do echo thy commands and the ground fair moves at thy feet to obey! Can I do otherwise, o soul of nature?"

"You're mocking me!" Anger pounded at Clarissa's temples. She was emotionally off-balance, something was terribly wrong. But why? What had happened to her, or to this place . . . or both? Her every muscle was tense. She wanted to scream!

"Freeeennn!"

But Fren merely threw back his shaggy head, choking on impish laughter . . .

((He watched as He had always watched. How many times had Clarissa brushed unknowingly past one of His sensors that formed a network through the valley. In one sense, He had watched her for months within the settlement, though only by culling datascopes provided by the settlement's central computer. That information revealed only her interaction in the settlement. Her personal world remained personal; the computer never invaded private dormiciles. He was beginning to see the edges of that world now for the first time. Now He even watched her directly, as earlier, standing hidden only a short distance away as she had searched the wood for Fren. His hand had extended in her direction, but He made no contact. It was not time. And, despite this strange new awareness of His watch, He knew His job.

He did not like what He was doing now, even if He understood why. He wanted to undo it. He wanted to deactivate the whole damned sensor network, step out and tell Clarissa everything. But He knew He wouldn't. He understood that this was important, but that knowledge only made Him more uneasy.

The soft, ivory-skinned woman laid Her hand on His shoulder. He looked into Her warm green eyes and felt peace. The peace came from deep understanding. There was a gentler, healing part to all this. There was a wholeness of design which made Him understand that He had to continue the hunt. If this one had become more personal, it was all the more reason to proceed.

The ivory-skinned woman replaced the hood of Her cloak and faded into the leafy veils behind Him.))

. . .and, as the laughter continued, so did Clarissa's anger and scorn grow inside her head. She started to turn away when she noticed a detail that had escaped her previously. In the upper branches of the tree was nestled a small metal housing with two rows of small micro-digital color displays. The box was rotating almost imperceptibly. Clarissa realized at once what the box must be and percieved, premonitionally, what was about to happen.

Clarissa screamed.

A thin finger of scarlet light passed through the upper branches making no contact. The beam hit the laughing figure of Fren. A white flash of light blinded Clarissa. Her vision returned in an instant, but when it had Fren was gone—so was most of the branch, leaving only a smoldering knob. It was wrong, cruelly wrong. The control nests didn't function that way. Their pruning circuit utilized low-arc lasers to carefully eliminate small sections of unwanted vegetation. Special sensors prevented them from ever being used against or around any form of animal life. But that meant that Fren was . . .was not . . .Clarissa shuddered, trying to think. Who was Fren? A synth? A holo? Now it was important to her. She had been lied to. She had been given a world, one she might be part of, only to have it all shown for a sham.

When Clarissa suddenly noted that the control nest had shifted again, it was too late. The scarlet beam descended downward—in that frozen moment, it seemed to move as a florescent liquid rather than light—passing close enough to her shoulder to singe a small patch on her pull-shirt. It hissed into the collected rain water, sending boiling spray in all directions. Clarissa jumped back, her hair whipping her face. With a loud clap, the rock basin shattered,

debris flying. The heavier pieces fell short of Clarissa, but she found herself pelted by coarse dust that scratched her.

Moments before, Clarissa's anger had been building. Now she realized that the nest was totally out of program. Fren may not have been a lie. The control nest had been aiming for her!

Clanssa threw herself through the low hovel doorway, but was unable to maintain her balance. As she fell, she rolled her weight to one side, did a shoulder roll and landed herself up on her feet. Survival mind was operating on full.

Clarissa was frightened. She could not recall ever having known the feeling before, not to this degree. Why should she have? The settlement was a totally controlled, functionally precise environment and beyond certain minor adjustments, nothing had ever gone seriously wrong. One was master of one's world at the push of a button.

"O, thou queen, the mountains far do echo thy commands and the ground fair moves at thy feet to obey!" The words pounded in Clarissa's head as she bolted from the hovel. It was true. And now that ground opened to swallow her up.

A beam struck a large branch on a neighboring tree, this beam more controlled. The branch fell, missing her, but only just. She continued to run. There was a sharp pop above her and she was showered in falling flame. Nothing caught —she kept running. Two beams hit the ground on either side of her; dust flew in her face. She spun sharply, looking up. One. Two. A third! How many more? All the control nests were out of program. All were preparing to fire at her.

A beam passed into the ground between her feet. The ground squealed from the energy burn reaction. Clarissa was kicked into the air as a geyser of dirt swelled up under her. She twisted in the air and landed hard.

Slowly she pulled herself up. Slowly, not so much from pain of body as from pain of soul. There was no use in running. All the control nests she could see were rotating towards her. She felt the slow, warm trickle from one edge of her lips. It was all so wrong. In every aspect, the control nests had been designed to prevent their bringing harm to any form of animal life. They had many functions, including the energy beam, but they had no programs for attack, either offensive or defensive. That, plus all of them breaking down—the settlement patrol should have been alerted immediately. This would be considered a priority one emergency. Where . . .

The hiss of a distant air sled interrupted Clarissa's thoughts. It sat out in the clearing, settlement techs waving her to come running. She had a chance now; but for what? This was it. She would never return for that third time. It would be her, alone, dancing, alone . . .

The techs began signalling more emphatically, holding open the air sled bay.

"O thou queen . . ."

A change suddenly enveloped Clarissa. Gone was the wrenching panic that tore at her, gone the sensation of drowning helpessness. Rising in its stead was a fire—part anger, part dawning awareness, part will ful determination.

It was all too pat!

The sled coming, just as she thought of it. The fact that the control nests had been focused on her since the sled had arrived and none had fired. Someone was in control. For whatever reason. And they did not want her dead! They wanted her back, in the settlement? Why? Why were they doing any of this? Who were they? She would find out in time, she knew, if she could keep herself believing those energy beams would never harm her.

Clarissa drew herself up into a pose, but it was fluid, not frozen. Her spine was straight, her weight centered in her groin. She had used this pose countless times in dance training. It held the body still without straining the muscles, and gave one the reassurirgly strong sensation of being firmly rooted. Her eyes blazed.

A beam fired, striking the ground a mere meter in front of her. Clarissa winced, then re-asserted her control.

Another beam, this one at her feet. But the beam was carefully tuned; there was no violent "kick-up." She smiled. She was right, someone was in control. Well, whoever that someone was, she would hold them to their bluff. She was sure they would come no closer.

A nest flashed. A beam struck her feet and arced up her front. Her pull-suit burst into flame and sprayed in all directions. She screamed, then froze, momentarily in shock. She stood poised, naked, alone. The single energy beam maintained itself with controlled extension at a meter's distance. Clarissa drew sharp breaths in short gasps. Every nerve in her body sang, but the beam hadn't touched her. It had skimmed the surface of her pull-suit; the reaction of the synthetic materials to the beam had done the rest. Clanssa began to take command of herself again, re-exerting the old disciplines.

Clarissa turned and saw the air sled still waiting, the techs still motioning. "No." Her throat was dry and the words came thickly. "I'll not run. Not from you—certainly not for you." The air sled and crew shimmered brightly, distorted and faded from view.

Holograms.

"What I will do," Clarissa continued weakly to no one in particular, "is dance. For me."

With the sweat and the dust, Clarissa was now glad to be unencumbered by clothes. She closed her eyes and recalled from her heart the song Fren had first played for her and recalled from her mind the colors that those notes had conjured. Like a slow massage working its way up her spine and outward, she felt her nerves quieting. She danced, and that dance was a song. In her mind she suddenly saw the laughing Fren; she saw the silent scarlet beam descend from above and the blinding flash which followed.

With a controlled grace from finely honed bodily responses, Clanssa lowered herself to the ground. Her cries were soft and low. Finally sleep, like a thick and soothing oil, blanketed her mind, drawing her out into a silent, dark, dreamless ocean.

((The woman of soft ivory and warm green eyes stepped up to Clarissa. She smiled very tenderly. Her eyes moist, and stooped gracefully to brush the raven locks that covered Clarissa's now peaceful features. The peace of a collapsed and settled structure.

With the hair She brushed away a part of the pain. She felt it tingle in Her fingertips. She felt it echo in Her heart. She felt it sting in Her eyes and run with Her vision, trying to flee. Tears dropped over Her cheeks. She shuddered. When Clarissa woke, some would be forgotten. Not all.

The woman stepped back and watched, as He had watched.

He looked at Clarissa, wistful. The tears in His eyes were not from her pain, but from His. He kneeled, leaned forward and kissed her on the cheek. It was a very paternal kiss. He could not take away from her as the woman had, he was not an empath. He was not even a manufactured synth or holo. He was a hunter. He was human.

It was over, His part. It was up to Clarissa now. He would return to watching.))

Third Movement
SEPTEMBER MOON

Clarissa woke, her mind cloudy for a moment. Then she slowly remembered, but dimly, with more distance than there should have been. She turned on her back and looked at the sky. Stars like splattered paint shone down at her and a full moon poured silver, glowing milk over the tree branches high overhead.

That sight woke her the rest of the way. It was night—no one had come for her. Or else they had come and missed her. Not that she really cared, she didn't want to go back. She didn't want to stay here either. As usual, she wasn't sure what she wanted, but she supposed she wanted to move on, find out what was beyond.

She pulled herself up and noticed the clothes laid out neatly. The top was a stretch that fastened over her chest, the skirt was calf-length, but with both enough fullness and enough body to not be cumbersome. Finally, there was a simple, green velvet cloak.

From somewhere in the moon washed distance, Clarissa heard the sound of a flute, like the howl of a single snow wolf carried on the whispers of a midnight wind. Clarissa started to flare angry again, but then forced it out with a sigh. She just hoped the mind games, whatever

they meant, were over. Looking down, she was at least glad to be saved the petty annoyance of facing *him* without any clothes.

The wind snapped at her cloak as Clarissa emerged onto the beach from between sentry cliffs. Spray wet one cheek. In great rolling, roaring whispers, waves washed onto the moon-white sand, dodging around rocks.

Fren smiled at her and lowered his flute. Around him five green sea nymphs, draped none too modestly in lichen and kelp, formed a circle, joining their hands over Fren's head. He stepped forward, placing his arms around two of the nymphs, and grinned hugely at Clarissa.

"I heard what they did. Pretty nasty."

"And I suppose you can't tell me who they are either."

Fren continued to smile.

"That was a hologram of you. But what are you?"

"If I'm a hologram, they just flick me on and off whenever they want."

Suddenly Clarissa clamped both hands solidly on either side of Fren's face, pressing. She almost laughed because his eyes seemed to bulge. "Damn it, I can touch you!"

Fren laughed sharply. "Tactile holograms, we mustn't forget. The technology is really remarkable."

Clarissa, still holding his face, looked at him intently. Then she smiled. She leaned close and kissed him warmly, fully, on the lips. She drew back satisfied.

"There comes a point in simulation, Fren, where the fact that it is simulation becomes irrelevant. If you assume a posture often enough, you will become that."

"You may be a holo or synth or possibly a figment of my understandably overwrought imagination . . . and, frankly, I couldn't care less. You are real. You are as real as anyone or anything need be. You are real inside me. Your music is real, your colors are real, your mocking laughter is real. Because I feel it!"

Clarissa turned and took springing, lithe strides over the sand, towards the rushing waves.

"Are you jealous?" Fren called after her.

Clarissa stopped momentarily and looked back at Fren. "Of them?" Clarissa looked at the slimy kelp draped on the posed nymphs and made a mental face. "I told you, you're not my type. Besides, I dance better than all of them."

Clarissa ran to the edge of the sand and let the water scramble over her bare feet. Fren pulled the flute to his lips and blew fine silver bubbles to the moon. Clarissa became enveloped in the music and the waves and the colors and the rhythms . . . and the dance.

She knew she would go back soon, but for now this was her moment, her suite. Here!

Finale - THE DESCENT: FALL ECHO AND WINTERSONG

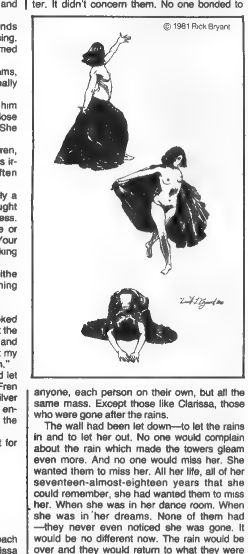
Silence.

All about her, gleaming towers raced each other for the sky. A useless race, Clarissa thought. They'll only run into the wall. She looked up—it was still there, a subtle glimmer which arced over the settlement.

Deep inside she had wished it would be gone. It was all still in their hands—it was their decision.

The streets were empty, the mezzanine and tram level shops dark save for the holoquins revolving in the big displays. Even the tube, which normally hissed at her as it cornered towards Eastend and Ribinaux Plaza, seemed eerily silent.

Clarissa remembered days like this, growing up in the settlement. They stayed indoors, behind screened windows, not looking out. She looked back at the sky and watched the spiraling tunnel of water that rolled out of the feeder and disbursed. It slapped her shield as it fell, blobby, smacking on the streets. Water saturation processing. That was the official explanation. Clarissa smiled. The water was coming down—the wall had been taken away. How many others went . . . how often? Every time they watered? Was the watering an elaborate ruse to cover the leaving, or did they merely utilize a convenient necessity. And no one noticed that someone had gone. It didn't matter. It didn't concern them. No one bonded to



anyone, each person on their own, but all the same mass. Except those like Clarissa, those who were gone after the rains.

The wall had been let down—to let the rains in and to let her out. No one would complain about the rain which made the towers gleam even more. And no one would miss her. She wanted them to miss her. All her life, all of her seventeen-almost-eighteen years that she could remember, she had wanted them to miss her. When she was in her dance room. When she was in her dreams. None of them had—they never even noticed she was gone. It would be no different now. The rain would be over and they would return to what they were and what they did and nothing would be changed. Nothing. She wanted at least that—that her leaving might change something.

She tried feeling angry, but there was only hollowness, like a hunger, and a little fear. She knew that she was going beyond the valley, beyond the trees, beyond the impish Fren, beyond his music of colors. To what? She didn't know and she now so badly wanted to know because too far beyond there might be no dance. No, that was wrong. There would always be dance . . . and feeling. In that moment she had the tiny, precious part of an answer. She could never go beyond herself. And maybe, just maybe, there were no more answers out there than there were in the settlement. Maybe all the real answers were within her own being.

Her instructors, at their sanctimonious worst, had been right.

Clarissa was no longer afraid.

She stood on the edge. Rain still plopped down on the settlement, but it was mostly behind her now. It was even beginning to slacken now. Soon the wall would come back up and all would be sealed up in the settlement again. Outside, the green hills would turn white with snow. That's how they saturated the hills.

She hesitated once more and looked back. Puddled reflections on the walkways winked back at her. The rain had stopped. In moments the wall would be raised. If she waited she would never step out again. Then it really was her decision.

Clarissa stepped. She heard the slight hum not quite announcing itself, but whispering promises. She drew her other foot over and pivoted. The settlement grew subtly hazier. The wall was up. She would never go back.

Clarissa shivered, but it wasn't from the cold. Her screen suit protected her from that. She stared into the dampened, deserted settlement for what seemed afterward, a very long time. Then, as the first snowflakes brushed against her cheeks, she turned slowly and descended into the valley below.

((He watched her final descent, always watching. Even standing next to her, as He knew he would soon be doing, He would still be watching. He was the hunter. There would always be a great, yet elusive, intimacy.

Snow dusted His boots white. A hand as white brushed snow from His shoulder. He turned to meet the woman's warm green eyes. The warmth had not faded, but there was sadness too. And joy. He nodded, reverently. She reached up and kissed him on the forehead.

It was done. The guardian had given Her blessing. He searched Her face for more, but if there was it remained veiled in the depth of those green eyes. Hunters knew very little about the guardians, save there always was one when they hunted. They were almost always empath and were either mute or practiced silence as a discipline. Communication was empathic or intuitive. Despite their mystery, the question of trust was not even considered. The guardians are not only necessary, they seemed somehow innate.

As He watched the woman walk away, She seemed to be swallowed by rippling lace curtains of snow.

He adjusted His respirator valve. The air was much too rich. It was a common problem for hunters as they never actually came from any of the womb-colonies they hunted

He now focused His attention on Clarissa. She was dancing. She passed Fren, who flouted cheerfully. She roughed his curly hair playfully and kissed him sadly but with no regret. She continued on, dancing.))

He loomed up before her in the snow. She was quite startled. He was a tall man with red hair and nodes on either temple. His eyes were silver, like Fren's bubbles, and his pupils had all of the colors of Fren's music. Aside from that, he wore a bulky synthetic suit with small modules attached at the hips, back and belt.

"My name is Arn. I have watched you, I have been with you. Your tests are finished. We shall go."

Clarissa hesitated. "Will I dance?" It was no longer a negotiation, she just wanted to know.

He looked at her, then he smiled so that the colors of his pupils were hilighted. "Yes. I imagine you will dance—for people who are not altogether like you, but who feel."

She dashed up to him and they walked together.

The Pflug ships were called, interchangable, either plug ships or fluke ships. The former was an accurate description and the latter was a hypothesis of their origin. They were short cylinders with rings and projections that anchored in sockets in the belly-curves of orbiting colonies. They had limited fuel and were fired from an orbital cruiser "up" to the orbital colony, looking like a primitive spark plug when attached. The "return" involved simply dropping out of the socket, firing to clear orbital conflict, and wallowing about in upper orbit until the closely scheduled cruiser made the pick-up. It still received no end of jokes and barbs from the media at large, but it served its purpose for the wombs. They were "cheap" to operate, required almost no maintenance and would hold two people plus supplies for eighteen months.

Arn's Pflug's was in upper. In moments they would arc around to recovery; the cruiser had already verified. Arn leaned back in his command seat with a slight sigh.

He was never sure why the prebriefing regulation had been put in the manual. None of the embries from the colonies ever remembered any of it. He was trying half-heartedly to tell Clarissa about the "Womb" projects—isolated colony platforms where specific conditions produced, or should produce, calculated x-factors. It produced, in environments of carefully groomed and maintained uniformity, erratic but adaptable genius. Scientific genius. Artistic genius. Philosophic and even political genius.

Clanssa, like others Arn had returned with, heard only bits and pieces. It was doubtful how much, even of that, registered.

". . . first extraterrestial contact one hundred years before. . . the worlds beyond opening cautious arms to Terran Alliance expansion and exchange . . .not all of the races humanoid . . . the mathematics breakdown. It only answers half the questions. Can't translate

". . . they would go together, the misfits; the scientist and the artist, the seekers and the feelers . ."

Arn fell silent and continued to watch Clarissa. His words had fallen emptily away from eyes that stared at reflections of themselves against the star-spattered abyss and the glowing yellow-grey orb below

Arn looked one last time at the original womb colony receeding above them. The holding beam alert sounded. He keyed the interloc relay sequence and leaned back again.

And waited.

ENCORE

Fren sat on a rock, turning his silver flute over and over in his hands, watching the patterns the reflected snow made. He looked back up at the woman of soft white skin and warm green eyes

"I still remember her." Fren hesitated, almost scratching. "Will I forget her?"

"Probably." The woman's voice was soothing. "Fauns don't have very good memories."

Fren had just started to blow a note. "Am I just a hologram?"

"Shhh." The woman pressed Fren's head lovingly against her. "These things are too complex for you. You are real, just as Clarissa said." She let go and Fren rose, shaking himself. She smiled as they walked away. "It is time to rest. Spring will come again. Soon enough."

Fren stopped to scratch at fleas.

The woman kept on walking and was lost to the snow. □

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MARVEL COMICS

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HOBSON & KRAFT HIRED TO PUT MARVEL BACK ON SCHEDULE

The recent 5 page increase of story content in every Marvel comic book has put most of the Marvel line dangerously behind schedule. The Marvel editorial staff and its freelance contributors are having difficulty maintaining the demanding production schedule when each book contained only 17 pages of material, but the 5 additional pages per book has strained Marvel's editorial and creative personnel to the limit. This situation was partially resonsible for the demotion of **Spider Woman** and **Star Trek** to bi-monthly status as well as forcing an abnormal number of fill-ins.

To alleviate this problem before it reaches uncontrollable proportions, Marvel has hired Michael Z. Hobson for the newly created vice-president of publishing position as well as making David Anthony Kraft a temporary "interim" editor. Hobson who began work on January 1, will have administrative control over all departments relating to publishing including the editorial, production and marketing departments. Pam Rutt, Marvel's public relations representative was quick to point out that he will function solely on an administrative level and will not interfere with the day to day performance of those departments.

Hobson was formerly the vice-president and publisher of the Scholastic Book Club, which is Scholastic's largest single publishing division. He was hired because both publisher Stan Lee and president James E. Galton have become too busy to devote enough time to overseeing the Marvel line. His position at Scholastic Books provided him with experience in the children's publishing field and it is hoped that this experience will help him to deal with the rather unique comic book publishing industry. His appointment means that both of the major comic book companies are now being supervised by people from outside the industry (DC's publisher Jenette Kahn entered the comic book field after editing **Dynamite** magazine).

David Anthony Kraft was hired to help on a more immediate basis. In addition to temporarily taking over the editorial helm of **The Ghost Rider** for 2 months (to which he was assigned because he's a biker) as well as some of next summer's annuals, Kraft will function as an "interoffice" editor, editing one or two issues of some of the books in danger of missing their deadlines. Thus Kraft will edit one issue each of **Master of Kung Fu**, **Conan the Barbarian** and **The Savage Sword of Conan**. A former editor of **Spidey Super Stories**, **Foom** magazine and the Marvel Magazine line, Kraft will probably work as an "interim editor" for, "a couple of months." Lance Tooks, Marvel's intern has been assigned to assist Kraft.

Lynn Graeme, editor of the drastically reduced magazine line, will also be able to help the editors of the color books because her schedule is not as demanding as it was previously. She will also be working as an interoffice editor.

MAN-THING, SPOTLIGHT CANCELLED, PREMIER ON WAY OUT

Amidst the flurry of activity to reorganize the Marvel line and get the books back on schedule, **Man-Thing** and **Marvel Spotlight** have been cancelled and **Marvel Premiere** may also be discontinued. The tryout books are being dropped so that they don't conflict with the forthcoming **Marvel Showcase** which Al Milgrom is editing. The best material commissioned for **Marvel Spotlight** (which was designed to "spotlight" Marvel characters who don't have their own series in solo stories) will appear in **Showcase**. **Spotlight** will end its run with issue 11, so there will be one more **Captain Universe** story left over. The story will probably not be appearing in the immediate future

Marvel Premiere which introduces new characters and series for consideration as regular

Excerpted from the "collectors item last issue" of **The Hulk**
Art by Gene Colan.

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comic books may also be discontinued for similar reasons although no "official" decision has been reached yet. The plan is to introduce new characters or titles in a mini-series format instead of using **Premiere.** Even if **Premiere** is cancelled all 4 of the scheduled **Dr. WHO** stories will appear.

Man-Thing had twice been cancelled in recent months, but had been reinstated to the schedule at the last moment. The series will end with **Man-Thing** 11.

HOWARD, HULK MAGAZINES AXES; PREVIEW ALTERED

Two of the four Marvel Magazines, **Howard the Duck** and **The Hulk** have been cancelled. Although reports that both of these magazines have been selling poorly has circulated through the industry for quite a while, Jim Shooter' maintains that "They **[Howard the Duck and The Hulk]** were not cancelled because of disastrous sales." According to Shooter, Marvel made the decision because, "It was no longer necessary to do non-code versions of what are essentially comic book characters." The last **Howard the Duck** to appear wlis issue 9 while **The Hulk** magazine will discontinue with no. 27.

Shooter also mentioned that the "Marvelcolor" format had become too expensive to maintain the cover price of **The Hulk** and since it wasn't certain if the market would sustain an increase to $2.00, it was decided to return to the less expensive black and white format. However "Marvelcolor" will still be used as an alternative format, even though it will not be used regularly.

Neal Adams has designed a new look for the remaining Marvel magazines. As part of that new look the **Marvel Preview** title will become **Bizarre Adventures** beginning with issue 25 (which will feature the long-promised "Lethal Ladies").

MARVEL PRODUCTIONS: NEW SPIDER-MAN CARTOONS

Marvel's recently purchased animation studio, Marvel Productions, Inc. has begun work on the production of 26 half hour Spider-Man cartoons. The plan is to forego a network development deal and invest Cadence Industries' (Marvel's parent corporation) own money in the shows because as editor-in-chief Jim Shooter phrased it, "We believe that a syndicate will buy the cartoons directly from us." By choosing to sell the cartoon directly to the syndicates, Marvel avoids the very real possibility that a network may reject the Marvel cartoons and refuse to air them even after investing a substantial sum of money on developing them. It is a common network practice to develop many more shows than can be aired.

Dennis Marx has been hired by Stan Lee to be the story editor of the show. Although it is not yet clear what direction the show will take, Marx flew to New York to talk to the top Marvel creative people about possibly contributing to the show. However, according to Shooter, "at this point no one has done anything because writing cartoons is more speculative and pays less than writing comics." When asked if West Coast comic industry emigrants Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway will work on the show because of their proximity to the studio, Shooter replied, "I very seriously doubt it, although I wouldn't rule any of those people out."

Probably Marvel will try to exploit its association with the highly regarded Japanese animation studio Tohe Films to get Tohe to help in the production of the **Spider Man** cartoons. The projected completion data of the 26 episodes is September, 1981.

Marvel Productions, Inc. is also working on a **Pink Panther Valentine Special** which will be a one shot, half hour, prime time show for ABC.

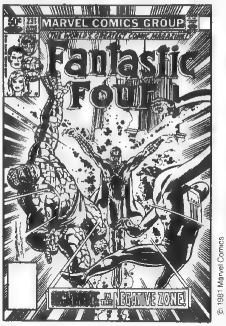
Variety reports that Marvel is working on Saturday morning cartoon series development deals with both ABC and NBC.

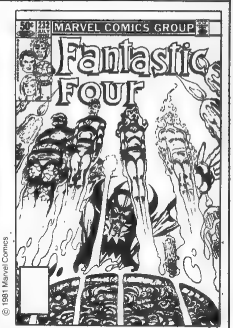
BOND COMIC DEFINITE: DRAGON SLAYERS & RAIDERS COMIC TIE-INS

Marvel Comics has been contracted to do the comic book adaptations of the new **James Bond** movie — **For Your Eyes Only, Raider of the Lost Arc** (a science fiction film directed by Steven Spielberg and produced by George Lucas) and **Dragon Slayer** (a Disney/Paramount sword & sorcery film). All 3 adaptations will be 64 pages in length and will be released to coincide with the expected June release of all 3 films. The multiple format "marketing attack" which was so successful in marketing Marvel's adaptation of **The Empire Strikes Back** last year, will be employed for all 3 adaptations. Thus Marvel is planning the virtually simultaneous release of the adaptations in a Super Special magazine, a British album book, a paperback edition and a serialization in 3 issues of a 21 page, regular 50¢ comic book.

The adaptation of **For Your Eyes Only** by Denny O'Neill, Frank Miller and possibly Tom Palmer will appear in the first 3 issues of a monthly **James Bond** comic book that will continue under a new creative team after the adaptation is finished. Although the **Dragon Slayer** adaptation (which will be drawn by John Buscema) is planned as a one shot, there is a possibility that **Raiders of the Lost Arc** (which is the first movie of a proposed triology) may also become a regular series after the completion of the adaptation (being done by Archie Goodwin, John Buscema and an unnamed inker). Marie Severin will more than likely ink either **Dragon Slayer** or **Raiders of the Lost Arc.**

The **James Bond** series will be based upon the Bond movie persona and will probably be written by Cary Bates. As of this writing, Marvel





has only acquired the right to adapt the **For Your Eyes Only** movie although some papers have been signed, a "full legal agreement" has yet to be reached. The comic book will use the actor's likenesses as models for the characters, so it can be inferred that the Marvel James Bond will resemble Roger Moore and not Sean Connery. When asked if Marvel had any plans for adapting the original Ian Fleming novels (which inspired "the Bond craze" more than 20 years ago) or in reprinting the English **James Bond** comic strip by Jim Lawrence and Carl Horak, Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter replied, "We're not interested in the English comic strip or in adapting the novels."

TREK, SPIDER WOMAN BI-MONTHLY

Star Trek and **Spider Woman** have been demoted to bi-monthly status because they could no longer be produced on a monthly status. "My editors were horribly overworked," asserts Jim Shooter, "and so I decided to cut the books back." Apparently both titles had enormous schedule difficulties because an extra month was needed to complete issues due at the printers when the decision to cut back was made.

The recent increases from 17 to 22 page stories was cited as one reason for the problem although the current shortage of inkers at Marvel was also blamed. "We couldn't keep Tom Palmer on **Star Trek** if it continued as a monthly," explained **Star Trek** editor Louise Jones.

BULLPEN BULLETINS RETURN, FORCES 21 PAGE STORY

One page of story material will be dropped from every Marvel comic book to make room for a revived Bullpen Bulletin beginning in the April on sale books. After the page was discontinued last year, Marvel received a number of letters protesting the move and editor-in-chief Jim Shooter decided to reinstate the feature which has been a Marvel trademark since the early 60's.

The new Bullpen Bulletins page will be a little different from its predecessors. It will be written by Shooter in his own style, which he describes as, "more straight-forward, more direct, and containing less hype." Stan Lee's Soapbox will not be a regular feature, Lee will only write occasional columns. Instead every Marvel editor will have the opportunity to write their own soapbox if they wish to do so.

Although the new Bullpen page will not be as strident in tone, there will be a yellow colored "hype box" plugging the latest Marvel releases each month.

HTD COLOR COMIC REVIVED

Following the cancellation of the **Howard the Duck** magazine, Marvel is planning a revival of the color **Howard the Duck** comic book. The series will be packaged in a format similar to **King Conan** and the book's initial numbering system will be maintained (the new series will pick up with issue 32).

At present 3 inventory scripts are being prepared for the reinstated comic book. These stories will be written by Jim Shooter, Jim Salicrup and Tom De Falco. Although it is still too early to announce a creative team as the series is still in the talking stages, Jim Shooter will edit the book and Gene Colan (who has penciled the majority of Howard's adventures) will more than likely handle the art chores.

ADAMS, STERANKO, KIRBY, DITKO, ROMITA, LEE REPRINT

Due to the commercial succes of **The Empire Strikes Back** British album book, Marvel plans to issue 4 more British reprint albums in the same format in the United States. Two of the albums will be available on the direct sale market only: **The X-Men** by Roy Thomas and Neal Adams (reprinting **X-Men** 56, 57 and 58, Adams' first 3 X-Men stories) and **Captain America** by Jim Steranko. Two other books, **The Hulk** (from the early Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby era) and **Spider-Man** (from the late Ditko and early John Romita period) will be available in other Marvel distribution outlets as well.

Since these album books are not considered a regular "reprint" book, it is not yet decided if any of the writers or artists whose work is being reprinted, will receive any royalty payments for the reissuance of stories they worked on more than a decade ago.

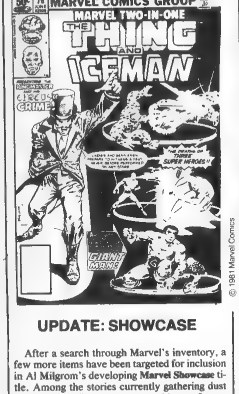
All 4 of these books will be printed in the Spring and released in early June. These hardbound, 65 page books will retail for $3.95.

STARBURST TO AMERICA

Starburst, "Marvel's British equivalent to **Starlog** magazine" according to Mike Friedrich, Marvel's Direct Sales Manager, will begin appearing in the United States with its April issue (#32). The 68 page monthly magazine which contains some interior color pages, will retail for $2.00.

Among the contents inside the first issue of **Starburst** to appear in the U.S. will be an article on **Superman II** by John Brosnan, an interview with Douglas Adams (author of **The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**) conducted by John Fleming, the first part of "The Frankenstein Chronicles" — a retrospective on the Boris Karloff **Frankenstein** films, Phil Edwards on the making of "The Monster Club" and another Fleming interview with Jacqueline Pearce of BBC-TV's **Blake's 7**.

The magazine is edited by Alan McKenzie. In addition to its coverage of fantasy and science fiction in the media, Friedrich mentioned to possibility of **Starburst** containing an original comic strip in the near future.



MARVEL COMICS GROUP
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN
HYDRO-MAN AND THE SANDMAN "TEAM UP!"
"HERE'S MUD IN YOUR EYE, SPIDEY!"
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UPDATE: SHOWCASE

After a search through Marvel's inventory, a few more items have been targeted for inclusion in Al Milgrom's developing **Marvel Showcase** title. Among the stories currently gathering dust in the Marvel files are a 10 year old story featuring the original X-men by Len Wein and Ross Andru (who are both DC editors now), a Spider-Man/Scarlet Witch teamup written by Mike Barr and drawn by Sandy Plunkett ("One of the best art jobs I've ever seen," Milgrom enthusiastically added), 2 incomplete issues of **Mogli, the Jungle Boy** adapted from the Rudyard Kipling tale by Roy Thomas (he did not begin scripting the story) and partially penciled by Gil Kane and a Roger McKenzie/Mike Grell Vision solo story originally commissioned for **Marvel Spotlight**. The Roger McKenzie/Frank Miller "Angel Dust" Daredevil story will also be used in **Showcase.**

GRAPHIC ALBUM NOTES

The first 3 Marvel collectors album books to appear will **The Death of Captain Marvel** by Jim Starlin, **Elric of Melnibone** by Roy Thomas and P. Craig Russel and **Dreadstar** a sequel to **Metamorphosis Odyssey**, also by Starlin. The 2 part Daredevil "Angel Dust" story by Roger McKenzie, Frank Miller and Klaus Janson will probably not appear as an album book after all.

There will be a **Prisoner** album book, although plans are not entirely set. The book will feature a Jack Kirby story and a story by Steve Englehart and Gil Kan, both of which were prepared for Marvel's aborted **Prisoner** comic in the mid-seventies. Roger Stern will probably rewrite some of the dialogue in the Kriby story which Walt Simonson has been tentatively slated to ink and color. Steve Leialoha will ink Gil Kane's pencils as well as color the second story.

The **X-Men** album book will definitely be drawn by Neal Adams. Marvel editor-in-chief Jim Shooter reports that "he's already started on it." Adams has signed a legally binding letter of agreement that commits him to the project.

All of the creative people working on Marvel's special projects have signed similar letters in lieu of a contract. The reason for this procedure is that a contract agreeable to both sides has not yet been drafted. Michael Hobson, Marvel's recently hired vice-president of publishing is in the process of formulating a standard contract that will be used for every Marvel special project. Shooter asserts that Hobson's publishing background as an executive at Scholastic Books makes the exacting task of drafting legal papers, much easier for Hobson that it had been for him. Shooter also added that the contract will be more in line with the terms of the normal agreement between publisher and creative personnel rather than the traditional comic book publisher's disregard of creator's rights because, "He [**Hobson**] is from the real world and tends to appreciate things from a real world point of view. It's refreshing for this industry."

MORE EPIC NEWS

The contents for the 6th issue of the now bi-monthly **Epic Illustrated** will be "Riders to Galaxy's End" by Ed Davis (color), "Predator" by Bob Aull (color), a B&W adaptation of the Harlan Ellison story "Life Hutch" by Ken Steacy (this is a sequel to "Sleeping Dogs" which appeared in **Epic** 4 and it is the second story in the Kyba War series), the 9th chapter of Jim Starlin's **Metamorphosis Odyssey** series ("Absolution" in color), "Next Orbit" by dean Bellow (color), "Flash Sport" by Roy Kinnard and Mike Saenz (color), "Kultz" by Stan Perry and Steve Bissette (B&W) and "Shipmates" by Rick Veitch. Also beginning in this issue is a media column by Denny O'Neil, a book column by Mary Jo Duffy and possibly a games column if a columnist can be found in time. The cover for **Epic** 6 is a Neal Adams painting.

Upcoming **Epic** projects include a color Trina Robbins story, at least one more Arthur Suydam story (he appeared in **Epic** 1), a black and white Tim Conrad science fiction story and covers by Conrad and Howard Chaykin.

ROGERS, NOT MILLER ON DR. STRANGE

Contrary to previous reports, Frank Miller will not be the regular **Dr. Strange** penciler, editor Al Milgrom announced at the January Marvel press conference. Instead Marshall Rogers will do 6 issues after the current slate of fill-ins runs its course. It has not yet been determined if Rogers will continue on the book after completing his 6 Issue stint, although Milgrom indicated that he hopes that Rogers would stay on permanently.

Apparently Miller felt over-committed on his other assignments to be able to handle the added pressure of the **Dr. Strange** book. Currently Miller is writing and penciling **Daredevil** on a regular basis as well as working on a story for **Epic Illustrated**. Miller is also committed to the Marvel adaptation of the forthcoming James Bond film, **For Your Eyes Only** and next summer's **Spider-Man Annual** (both projects are being written by Denny O'Neil).

NOTES

The credits for **Ka-Zar** 1 which were left off the splash page were Bruce Jones writer, Brent Anderson penciler and Carlos Garzon inker . . . The writing on **The Savage Sword of Conan** will be split between Michael Fleisher and Bruce Jones because both of them are busy writing novels, one of which may be published as a hardcover book. Neither of these novels are Marvel projects . . . Man-Wolf will be revived in the **Peter Parker Spectacular Spider-Man Annual**. Upcoming villains in the regular **Spectacular Spider-Man** comic include Nitro, Jack O Lantern, Killer Shrike, The Ringer, The

COMIC NEWS

Beetle and the Fool Killer. The Jack O Lantern story will be "very roughly" laid out by Jim Shooter . . . A **Power Man/Iron Fist — Rom** crossover story is being planned. They will be 2 separate, but related stories . . . The 50th issue of **Star Wars** will be a special double-size issue by Archie Goodwin, Al Williamson and Carlos Garzon . . . **Defenders** 100 will also be a double-size issue which will be done by that book's regular creative team. If the schedules of the **Rom** creative team permits, **Rom** 25 may be a double-size issue . . . Joe Sinnott is the regular inker on **The Defenders** and **Rom** (beginning with issue 20) . . . The cover for the **Crazy Super Special** is by Bobby London. Inside the issue will be a Spider-Man fun puppets story penciled by John Romita Sr. . . . Terry Austin will begin inking John Byrne's **Fantastic Four** with issue 232. Meanwhile, Byrne is the new regular **Spectacular Spider-Man** penciler . . . Jim Belushi (John's brother) is the voice of Howard the Duck on the radio show . . . Upcoming in **What If** is "What If Phoenix Had Lived" by Mary Jo Duffy, Jerry Bingham, Terry Austin, Bruce Patterson and others, "What If Spider-Man's Clone Had Lived" (written by Bill Flanagan), "What If the Silver Surfer Had Joined the Fantastic Four" (also written by Flanagan), and "What If the Champions Hadn't Been Disbanded?" . . . Bob McCleod is the regular **Conan** inker . . . The Ladykiller will appear in an upcoming **Daredevil** issue . . . Dr. Strange is a guest star in **Micronaughts** 30 . . . Upcoming in **The X-Men** is a 3 part Dr. Doom Story. Josef Rubenstein is the regular **X-Men** inker . . . Next summer's **Hulk Annual** will feature Captain Universe in a story by Bill Mantlo and Rick Leonardi . . . There is a possibility that a **Rom Annual** may appear next summer, although nothing has been finalized. If one is done it will be written by Bill Mantlo and Marie Severin may pencil it . . . Jim Shooter and Gene Colan may be the new **Captain America** creative team. Meanwhile, two 17 page inventory stories by Mike Barr and Lee Elias will be used in **Cap** 257 & 258. Five page framing sequences are being added to expand the stories to Marvel's new 22 page length. Chris Claremont and Mike Zeck have done a fill-in for issue 259 . . . The Arabian Knight will face the Ghost Rider in an upcoming issue of his book . . . Roger Stern will do the 1982 Marvel Calender. It will celebrate Spider-Man's 20th anniversary by showcasing Spider-Man's first meeting with various Marvel characters . . . Marvel writers are no longer receiving pages of original art for the stories they have written . . . Chris Claremont, not Denny O'Neill, will be writing the Daughters of the Dragon in **Bizarre Adventures** 25 . . . On the day after John Lennon's death, frantic plans were begun at Marvel to release **Marvel Super Special 4** which contained "The Beatles Story" (story by David Anthony Kraft, art by George Pérez and Klaus Janson) in a "John Lennon Memorial Edition" with a different cover and some additional text material on Lennon's murder. However plans for this "special edition" were shelved a day later in the interests of good taste . . . Chris Claremont recently signed a contract with Marvel requiring him to write 2½ books a month (or other equivalents like movie treatments and collector's albums) . . . Count Dracula will return in **Defenders** 95 . . . Gil Kane is penciling an issue of **Star Trek** . . . **Moon Knight** 6 had a painted cover by Earl Norem . . . The **Superman vs. Spider-Man** book will be on sale in April. The book's price has been upped to $2.50. Sol Brodsky is working on a paperback version of the tale which will be released simultaneously with the regular book . . . Upcoming in **Spider Woman** are guest appearances by The X-Men and The Avengers. Spider Woman will face the Flying Tiger and Morgan Le Fey in future issues . . . **Marvel Super Heroes** which reprints past issues of **The Incredible Hulk** is now monthly . . . **LATE BREAKING NEWS:** Ralph Macchio and Mark Gruenwald are no longer the regular **Thor** writers although they will continue on the **Tales of Asgard** series . . . Bill Mantlo will not be writing **The Avengers** after all. At this point Jim Shooter will probably take over the book and a number of sweeping changes are being discussed. The Silver Surfer and Tigra may be guest appearing in a future **Avengers** story .....

A preview of the Superman vs Spider-Man book now scheduled for an April release

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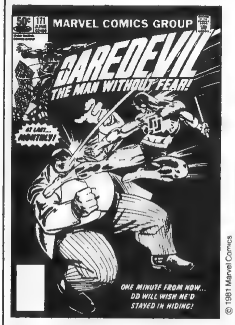

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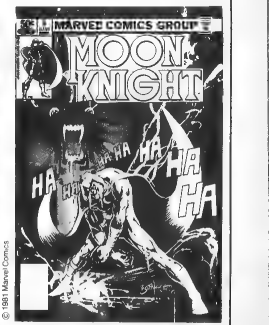

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DC COMICS

Roy Thomas's unnamed character drawn by Ernie Colon

HARRIS TRANSFER CAUSES DC EDITOR SHUFFLE

Jack C. Harris has relinquished all of his editorial and public relations responsibilities to become DC's Assistant Foreign Sales Manager under Milt Snappin. The DC Export Division sells and distributes DC properties to more than 24 foreign publishers and the new position demanded too much of Harris's time to continue in his previous capacity. However Harris will continue to write the Supergirl and Kamandi features.

All of the titles under Harris's editorial control have been assigned to Len Wein and Dick Giordano. To ease the added workload on the pair, DC has instituted a new system where the more experienced editors have hired assistants who they will supervise very loosely. The new "associate editors" will receive their own books to edit as well as helping with the editorial chores on their "senior partner's" books.

Cary Burkett is Dick Giordano's new assistant/associate. He has been assigned to edit **Ghosts, Secrets of Haunted House** and **Unexpected** which is the majority of DC's "horror" line (Karen Berger will remain as editor of **House of Mystery**). In addition to assisting Giordano on the three **Batman** books and the forthcoming **Arak, Son of Thunder**, Burkett will continue to write the Batgirl and Nemisis backup features as well as the Superman/Batman strip in **World's finest**.

The bulk of Harris's books were given to Les Wein and he will be working with Michael W. Barr. Barr will edit **Flash**, **The Legion of Super-Heroes**, **Weird War** and **The Unknown Soldier** titles, while Wein will have editorial control of **Dial 'H' for Hero**, **Green Lantern**, **World's Finest**, **The Justice League of America**, **Mystery in Space** (cancelled with issue 121) and the upcoming **All Star Squadron**.

Harris had previously given up editorial control of **Warlord** to Ross Andru before his transfer to the foreign sales division. There will be no change in the **Warlord** strip, although a revamped Kamandi strip (written by Jack Harris) will become the book's regular backup feature beginning with issue 47 (Andru's first issue).

Andrew Helfer has inherited Harris' public relations and publicity responsibilities. He will also continue in his capacity as Joe Orlando's editorial assistant.

In an unrelated move, Irene Vartanoff has been hired to assist Paul Levitz and Karen Berger on special projects and business affairs.

THOMAS' S&S AND ALL STAR: MORE DC INSERTS

Both of Roy Thomas's new monthly books, **All Star Squadron** and the as yet untitled sword and sorcery series will be showcased in a free 16 page insert bonus in the May issue of an established DC title. **Justice League** 193 will spotlight **All Star Squadron** by Thomas and Rich Buckler and **Warlord** 48 will contain the premiere of the new sword & sorcery series by Thomas, Ernie Colon and Tony De Zuniga.

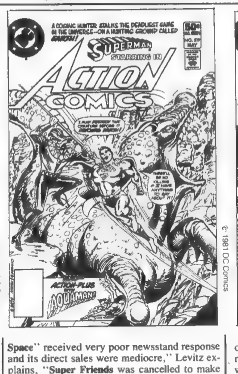
The still unnamed barbaric hero is the only new featured character that Thomas has created for DC and the strip had been delayed by negotiations concerning the ownership of the character and future novelization rights. Thomas had originally planned to use the character in a novel that he was hoping to write, but he eventually decided to use him in a comic book. According to Dick Giordano, the character will be in the sword & sorcery mold although the strip will be loosely set in the recognizable historical background of the rule of Charlemagne. Giordano was quick to point out however that the series will not be locked into a specific time sequence and that the series is likely to "telescope time."

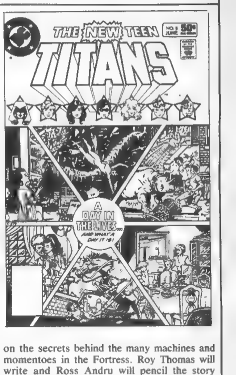
The lead character is an American Indian who is the last survivor of his tribe. He is rescued by Viking raiders and is transported to Europe. The series will follow his journey through the European continent in search of something to believe in, now that he is alone in the world. Much of the strip's premise will be based on the contrast of his Indian background with the barbaric culture of Medieval Europe. He will adapt some of the Vikings' customs and will occasionally use a non-Indian weapon, like a sword.

Ernie Colon was recommended by Thomas to Giordano as the artist for the strip. However since Colon does not have much experience with sword & sorcery material, Tony De Zuniga will be finishing the art over Colon's layouts.

When asked if this new creation will resemble Conan, a character that Thomas scripted for 10 years, Giordano replied, "I'd like for that not to be the case. So far we've avoided the most obvious pitfalls, but only time will tell if we've been totally successful." Naming the character has been a problem and as **The Comic Times** went to press, one possible title for the series had just been dismissed.

All Star Squadron will not be a straight re-


A COSMIC HUNTER STALKS THE PEOPLEST GAME IN THE UNIVERSE—ON A HUNTING GROUND CALLED EARTH!
SUPERMAN APPEARANCE IN
ACTION COMICS
ACTION PLUS
© 1981 DC COMICS



vival of the Justice Society. Instead the series will feature a mixture of old JSA members, some other non-JSA Golden Age DC heroes and some Quality characters. The regular JSA characters will appear infrequently (except for Hawkman, Hawkgirl, the Atom and Wonder Woman) and expected to appear in the first stories are Plastic Man, the Blackhawks, Phantom Lady, Liberty Belle and Firebrand. Firebrand incidently may be replaced by his sister who will also be able to control fire, in an effort to introduce another woman into the predominately male group.

The stories will be set in the early days of World War II on Earth Two (DC's Golden Age Earth) and the Quality charcters will be treated as Earth II counterparts to the chracters on DC's Earth X. The 16 page story being used as the **Justice League** insert takes place on the eve of Pearl Harbor December 6, 1941. The first 2 issues of **All Star Squadron** will occur on Dec. 7 & 8. In early issues the All Star Squadron will face the team of Degaton and Solomon Grundy in a time-travel series.

Thomas has switched assignments with Gerry Conway and will now be scripting **The Legion of Super-Heroes**. Conway will be taking over **Batman** and since he already scripts the Batman lead feature in **Detective**, he will have more freedom to do cross-over stories and continuing subplots through both books.

Other Thomas projects include the 200th Superman-Batman teamup that will appear in **World's Finest** 278 as a 48 page story. "Secret Origins of the Superman-Batman Team" will resolve the contradictions in the many stories that reputedly featured the "first Superman-Batman teamup." Rich Buckler will probably pencil the story.

TWO TITLES AXED

Both **Mystery in Space** and **Super Friends** have been cancelled. The cancellations were not related according to Paul Levitz, DC's Manager of Business Affairs; "**Mystery in Space**" received very poor newsstand response and its direct sales were mediocre," Levitz explains, "**Super Friends** was cancelled to make room for [Roy] Thomas's new titles."

One commonly believed axiom in the comics industry is that science fiction does not sell, but Levitz disagrees, "I think a science fiction anthology book can be done that will sell, even though **Time Warp** and **Mystery in Space** were lukewarmly received by the public." Some of the **Mystery in Space** material already completed before the book's cancellation with issue 121, will be used in the mystery books.

Super Friends was cancelled despite a guaranteed weekly media tie-in with the Saturday morning cartoon show. When asked for an opinion why the television show did not help sales of the comic book Levitz replied, "We've never found that a Saturday morning show had any effect on comic book sales." Levitz added that DC will be doing a **Super Friends** special with General Foods later this year. The last **Super Friends** to appear will be issue 47.

SUPERMAN II TIE-INS

DC is currently working on 3 print tie-in projects to coincide with the American release of **Superman II** next June.

A 3 part mini-series entitled **Superman Presents the Egyptian Chronicles** will be on sale in June, July and August. In this series edited by Senior DC editor Julie Schwartz, Superman returns to the surviving Kryptonian city of Kandor to trace his roots for a television special being produced by Morgan Edge. Problems arise when Superman learns that someone is trying to prevent him from learning about his family's past. The series will be scripted by E Nelson Bridwell and penciled by Curt Swan. No inker has been asigned to the project as of this writing.

Another direct comic book tie-in to **Superman II** is a special tabloid-size comic, **Superman's Fortress of Solitude**, the magazine which is being edited by Len Wein, will concentrate on the secrets behind the many machines and momentoes in the Fortress. Roy Thomas will write and Ross Andru will pencil the story which involves a plan to destroy the Earth by planting a time bomb in the Fortress.

Also coming from DC is **Superman II — The Movie Book** which contains hundreds of stills from **Superman II**. This filmbook was designed and written by Joe Orland and Michael Fleisher and will be released in June. It will retail for $2.95.

DC has not yet announced a cover price for **Superman's Fortress of Solitude**.

BACKUP EXPERIMENT

Beginning with **Action** 522, **Action**'s three backup features (The Atom, Airwave and Aquaman) will be combined into one rotating series with each character appearing in 2 solo stories and then teaming up in a "bridge story" with the character that will succeed it. To illustrate: The Atom will appear in issues 522 and 523 and then will team up with Airwave in issue 524. Airwave will then have solo stories in **Action** 525 & 526 and will be co-featured in issue 527. Aquaman will star in his own solo stories in issues 528 and 529 and then will co-star with The Atom in 530. The rotation will repeat with issues 531 and 532 that will star the Atom and so on.

SUPERMAN FAMILY MONTHLY

Beginning with issue 208, **Superman Family** will be released on a monthly schedule. Improved sales were cited as the reason for the decision.

Supermn Family 208 will feature the reappearance of Mr. Mxyztplk, the "chinless" imp from the 5th dimension who was introduced in the 1940's (his modern day successor is spelled Mxzptlk).

COMIC NEWS

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HOWEVER, TWO MORNINGS LATER...
HELLO, I'D LIKE TO SPEAK WITH JOSEPH GREENE, PLEASE!
I'M SORRY, MISS ARC... GREENE LEFT US YESTERDAY...
...IN THE COMPANY OF HIS SISTER.
NO SISTER? HOW DO...
CLICK
HE HAS NO SISTER.
MADAME XANADU GLIDES DETERMINEDLY TO ANOTHER SMALL STREET IN THE VILLAGE.
HMM... A LOVELY ONE. MY PENTHOUSE IS JUST A FEW DOORS AWAY, FREDDY!
YEAH, WHOO, LET'S GET IT ON!

A page from Madame Xanadu 1 drawn by Marshall Rogers

Daily Star Editor George Taylor who was introduced in **Action** 1 will die in the following issue in a Mr. and Mrs. Superman story scripted by E. Nelson Bridwell.

ENGLEHART-ROGERS IN DC SPECIAL

The inventory 25 page Madame Xanadu story by Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers will be the lead feature in DC's first direct sale marketing experiment. **Madame Xanadu** will be a one shot, dollar comic which will contain 32 pages of story material and no ads. It will not be submitted to the Comics Code for approval.

In addition to "Dance For Two Demons" by Englehart and Rogers, **Madame Xanadu** 1 will feature a 7 page fantasy story by J.M. DeMatteis and Brian Bolland and a pull-out poster by Michael W. Kaluta. The cover is also by Kaluta. **Madame Xanadu** will be available in the specialty shops at the end of March.

DC'S DIGESTS: MONTHLY

Both of DC's Digest Comics (**Best of DC** and **DC Special**) have been upped to monthly status. They will continue to contain 100 pages of reprint material (96 pages plus covers) and will be edited on a rotation basis.

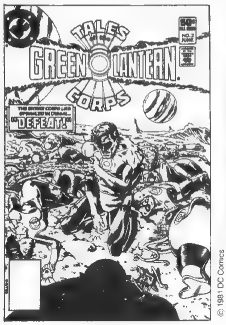
Beginning with February and extending through July, **The Best of DC** will feature collections of stories centered around the following themes: **Superman's Adventures Through Time**, **DC Comics Presents**, **Batman's Villains**, **Superboy**, **Superman** (to coincide with the **June** release of **Superman II**) and **Krypton**. Appearing in **The DC Special** during those same months will be selected reprints from these DC strips: **Secret Origins of Super-Heroes**, **Warlord**, **Justice League**, **The Haunted Tank**, **Strange Sports Stories** and **Alien UFO's** (from DC's old science fiction line.)

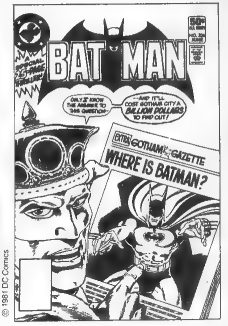
The **Warlord DC Special** edited by Laurie Sutton will cull various segments from over 10 issues of **The Warlord** to create the "Deimos Saga." This 93 page tale will recount the monumental clash between Travis Morgan and Deimos.

The Best of DC 14 (on sale in April) which focuses on **Batman's Greatest Villains** will reprint the Steven Englehart/Marshall Rogers Penguin story, "The Malay Penguin" and a Two Face story by Danny O'Neil, Neal Adams and Dick Giordano. The digest will also contain 7 pages of new original material by newcomer Denys Cowan.

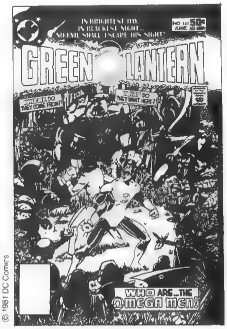
NOTES

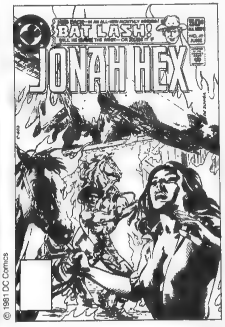
Jim Starlin has penciled and inked 2 stories for **DC Comics Presents** . . . The "full and true story" of the origin of the Red Tornado will be revealed in **Justice League of America** 195 written by Gerry Conway. Conway is also planning to revive a number of old JLA villains including The Key . . . **Teen Titans** 9 will feature the return of the Puppeteer a re-named villain who first appeared in **Green Lantern**. Upcoming Titan stories include a battle with the mythological Titans on Paradise Island and the search for the killers of the original **Doom Patrol** members . . . Gerry Conway's The Vixen, a super-heroine that was scheduled but never published will appear in the Superman story in **Action Comics** 521 . . . Green Lantern will be encountering The Omega Men, a group of alien political refugees while camping with Carol Ferris in a story by Marv Wolfman for **Green Lantern** 142. The tale will conclude in issue 143 . . . Gerry Conway and Rich Buckler have done a fill in story for **World's Finest** involving Superman and Robin's search for a missing Batman who has been "Buried Alive" . . . A two part Paul Kupperberg Dr. 13 story will appear in **Ghosts** 101. The cover for that issue was drawn by Michael W. Kaluta. Kaluta also did the cover for **Brave and the Bold** 176 which teams The Swamp Thing with The Batman . . . Dennis Jenkins is inking an Adam Strange backup strip over Rodin Rodriguez's pencils . . . **Superman Family** 208 introduces a new career for Supergirl . . . Dick Giordano will be editing the Marvel/DC crossover, **The Batman vs. The Hulk** which will be scripted by Len Wein and penciled by Jose Luis Garcia Lopez . . . George Pérez is the regular **Green Lantern** cover artist . . . Don Heck will alternate with Carmine Infantino as penciler of the **Dial 'H' for Hero** strip . . . Frank McLaughlin will ink the **Tales of the Green Lantern Corps** mini-series over Joe Staton's pencils. The series will be scripted by Mike Barr and edited by Len Wein and Dick Giordano . . . Gerry Conway and Carmine Infantino have collaborated on a mystery story about shopping bag ladies for an upcoming issue of **House of Mystery** . . . In a story plotted by Roy Thomas and scripted by Gerry Conway (with an assist from Thomas), the Batman must face a Yeti/human crossbreed in **Batman** 337. Garcia Lopez and





Steve Mitchell penciled and inked the story respectively . . . A Wonder Woman telephone was recently put on the market joining the successful Superman phone. A Batman telephone is currently under consideration . . . A Superman balloon made its debut at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade amid much media coverage. Over 100 feet long, the Goodyear balloon is the largest parade balloon ever made and it has been entered in **The Guinness Book of Records**. Superman's face was painted by DC President Sol Harrison and Dick Giordano to insure that a true likeness was retained . . . **Flash** 300 will be a 48 page Dollar Comic . . . Other properties being promoted for future movie projects by **The Batman**, **Swamp Thing** producer Mike Uslan. include Leon Uris's **Trinity** . . . Sol Harrison was re-elected the President of the Comics Magazine Association of America (The Comics Code Authority). Elected Vice Presidents were Stan Lee and Leon Harvey (President of Harvey Comics). John L. Goldwater was re-elected the Chairman of the Board of Directors . . . Warner Communications has increased the "pension" of Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster to $30,000 . . . Metamorpho will team with Superman in a future issue of **DC Comics Presents** . . . Len Wein will script "Whatever Happened to the Crimson Avenger?" Future "Whatever Happened to . . . ?" stories include Rip Hunter, Time Master and Rex the Wonder Dog. The Rex story guest stars Detective Chimp and will be drawn by Gil Kane . . . The Robot G.I. returns in Weird War Tales 101 in a story written by Bob Kanigher and drawn by Pepe Moreno Casares. ■





INDEPENDENT PUBLICATIONS

NATIONAL LAMPOON

Three months after the departure of **Lampoon** "Funny Pages" editor, Shary Flenniken, her assistant, Beth Firmin is also leaving the magazine. After Firmin's exit, the editorial control of the "Funny Pages" will revert back to the **National Lampoon**'s art department, although senior editor Gerald Sussman will, in Firman's words, "keep an eye on the section."

"I'm afraid that our original concept for the 'Funny Pages' as being a mass market for comic art and new cartoonists will be difficult to maintain after I'm gone, although Gerry Sussman will try, " Firmin continues, "I'm not sure they'll be able to devote the time that we did to the 'Funny Pages' because they're responsible for the whole magazine."

Beginning with the February issue, **National Lampoon** will cost $2.00. This 33% price increase is due to the rising costs of printing.

"Sin" is the February **Lampoon**'s theme and both Gahan Wilson (in a 4 page full-color spread) and Sam Gross (in a 2 page piece) interpret the evils of sin. This month's "Funny Pages" features the work of two newcomers: Peter Elwell's "Storytime for Young Folks" and Mimi Pond's "Coversations; Joey's Girlfriend." Also in February's "Funny Pages" is "Magic Shoes" by Gerry Capelle, "Take One" by Gary Hallgren (**Air Pirate Funnies**), "Well Known American Types" by Mark Knudson, "Teenage Lifestyles" by Roz Chast, "Barbelles" by Jane Brucker, "Timberland Tales," and work by Ron Barrett, Charlie Rodrigues, Gahan Wilson and M.K. Brown.

In case you missed it the January **Lampoon** ("Excess") featured 2 separate but interwoven 3 page color pieces of political reportage covering the Republican (Joe Schenkman) and Democratic (Shary Flenniken) conventions. In the 8 page Funny Pages section were "Gay What the Hey" —Ron Barrett's poke at the Gay Scene, Bobby London's "Worker Ant," "A Love Story" — a look at pigeons by Gerry Capelle, "The Day Nothing Went Right," by Rick Geary, "Rich People, Poor People" by Spain Rodrigues, the return of Charlie Rodrigues's "Aesop Bros.," "Growing Up" by Bill Plympton and another Appeltons misadventure by B.K. Taylor.

HEAVY METAL

Although **Heavy Metal** has completely severed its connections with **Metal Hurlant**, it will continue to contain a great deal of European material. Despite the difficulties in getting material from the **Metal Hurlant** artists (like Moebius and Philippe Druillet) some of whom are binded by an exclusive contract to the French magazine, the "new" **Heavy Metal** will featukre 60% European material. Single issue stories and longer serials have been purchased from such artists as Bilal, Caza and Esteban Marato. Among the recently purchased American material is a story by Berni Wrightson and Bruce Jones entitled "Freak Show" which will probably see print next summer.

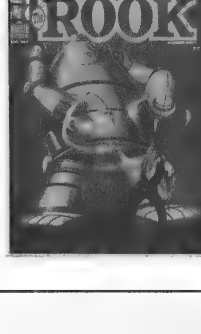
Phillipe Druillet's "Salambo" concludes in the March **Heavy Metal** and two new series begin: "Tex Arcana" by John Findley — a fantasy western and "Milady 3000," a mysterious, intergalactic, female secret agent by Magnus. Also in that issue is part of Robert E. Howard's "Bloodstar" by Richard Corben, an installment of "What Is Reality Papa?" and an editorial on gun control by Harlan Ellison. The front cover is by Mati Klarwein and Jeronaton contributes an illustration for the back cover.

On sale now is the February **Heavy Metal** which features an excerpt from **Yesterday's Lily** — Jeff Jones's new book, "The Horny Goat"—a 23 page Moebius story, an illustrated essay on the Luca Convention by Rick Veitch, "Bloodstar," and work by Kirkegaard, Jim Burns and Voss. The editorial is by William S. Burroughs on violence in the subways of the future.

WARREN

A number of Frank Frazetta cover paintings originally done for Warren in the early and mid-60's will be reprinted as covers for new Warren magazines. Apparently Warren Publishing owns the comic book rights to the covers, although Frazetta has the option (which has been frequently exercised) to use that work for non-comics material like paperback book covers, posters and trade paperback collections. The reprinted Frazetta covers will be intermixed with covers from the huge Warren inventory. **Creepy** 127 will have a Frazetta cover.

Don McGregor's new series **The Mist** will premiere in **Eerie** 120. A Filipino artist, Jun Lofamia drew the first 2 series episodes. A problem occured in the series's first story because Lofamia was completely unfamiliar with the New York setting of the story. Four pages contained such glaring errors in New York geography, that they had to be redrawn. However the redrawn pages did not arrive before the printing deadline and McGregor and the Warren editorial staff were forced to try to integrate the story's missing material into the existing



artwork. A complete examination of this situation and a profile of **The Mist** series will appear as part of Don McGregor's column in **The Comic Times** 6. Meanwhile, Val Mayerik will take over as the regular artist for the series, beginning with the third story.

Terry Lindall is currently working on a cover for Warren. H.R. Giger (the designer of **Alien**) has completed a cover painting for an upcoming issue of **1994**.

CHARLTON

Editors George Wildman and Bill Pearson are still looking for material for *Charlton Bullseye*. They request that potential artists and writers send complete, ready to print stories (written, penciled, inked and lettered —Charlton can handle the coloring), with an image size of 10 x 15 (or any proportionate size) on strathmore paper that are not continued (no serials) and that do not exceed 10 pages in length. Shorter stories are acceptable.

Charlton Bullseye 1 will be on sale in March, 1981.

Charlton has reinstated the reprint title *The Many Ghosts of Dr. Graves* to a bi-monthly schedule. The last issue of that title, #65, appeared in April, 1978.

The second issue of **Bullseye** will spotlight the adventures of Long Eared-Jack by Mark Allan Armstrong. Armstrong is a frequent contributor to **Surf City comics** and has done a number of covers for **The Buyer's Guide**.

CKR

Just out from CKR Publications is **Captain Canuck** 14. This issue's lead story is entitled "Firefight" in which Captain Canuck's time travelling ends in fire-ravaged Northern Ontario. The story is written and drawn by George Freeman and colored and lettered by Jean

Claude St. Aubin. Also in this issue is "Beyond," a 7 page fantasy story by J.C. and Jaqueline.

Still available is **Captain Canuck** 13, the first issue to feature both script and art by Freeman

© 1981 Will Eisner

When "The Confession of Moeks Mallon" was drawn in 1941, Weepy Willie was just another hood. Forty years later the character bears a remarkable resemblance to his now bald and mustachioed creator. From **Will Eisner's The Spirit** 26.

KITCHEN SINK

Upcoming in **Will Eisner's The Spirit** 27 will be a preview of the first chapter of a new Eisner graphic novel called **The Big City** which is being prepared for a Danish publisher. The novel will run over 100 pages and consist of 16 to 18 chapters with each chapter being a collection of episodes centering around one aspect of New York City life. Each chapter will feature a double-sized color painting from 8-10 pages of "graphic narrative." The chapter that will appear in **The Spirit** 27 is tentatively titled "The Treasure of Avenue C." That chapter's painting will be printed as a centerspread and will appear in full color.

Also in **The Spirit** 27 will be "A Crime Primer: M-U-R-D-E-R" (the first Eisner story that Lou Fine finished after Eisner went into the army), "The Devil's Shoe's," "Montabaldo" (featuring Carrion), "Rifle Magazine," "The Amulet of Osiris," two "Outer Space" Spirit stories ("The Man In the Moon" by Walt Wood and "Amulet of Osiris" by Al Wenzel) and an illustrated article by Will Eisner on the use of the panel in comic book layout.

Other Spirit projects include a special new Spirit story appropriately entitled, "The Jam." "The Jam" is a brand new Spirit story by Will Eisner, Marshall Rogers, Frank Miller, Trina Robbins, Denis Kitchen, Fred Hembeck, Art Spiegelman, Harvey Kurtzman, Pete Poplaski, Terry Austin and others. To answer the requests for new Spirit stories, Eisner conceived a very loose plot outline and editors Kitchen, Eisner and Cat Yronwode contacted a number of artists who contributed anything from one panel to two pages of art.

"Life on Another Planet," Will Eisner's 128 page graphic novel concluded in **The Spirit** 26. The story will be reprinted in Europe.

Upcoming Kitchen Sink titles include **Crystal Night** (by Sharon Rudnal), **Snarf** 9, **Nard 'n' Pat** 2 and **Dope** 4.

LAST GASP

New from Last Gasp Eco-Funnies is **Young Lust** 6 and **Zippy** 3. Both books have been released in a new, larger format (approximately the size of Richard and Wendy Pini's **Elfquest**) and the interiors are printed on white paper.

Co-edited by Bay-area cartoonists Bill Griffith and Jay Kinney, **Young Lust** 6 is a special taboo issue. Some of the subjects that are dealt with in this issue include an incestuous 3-way lesbian marriage, S & M, alien romance, street runaways, mud wrestling, espionage, fluffy sheep and erotic dreams. This anthology book features work by such cartoonists as "Algernon Backwash" and Spain, Griffith, Kinney, Greg Irons, Kim Deitch, M.K. Brown, Paul Mavrides, Melinda Gebbie, Michael McMillan, Phoebe Glockner, Diane Noomin, Robert Schwartz, Gary Panter and Mary Wilshire.

Zippy 3 is the latest of 5 titles based upon Griffith's Zippy the Pinhead character. This issue features a 13 page Zippy tale "E Pluribus Pinhead" and "Cast of Characters" — a 6 page story where all of Griffith's characters bring their wizened creator to The Underground Cartoonists Retirement Center. Also in this issue is a representative selection of Zippy's daily comic strip and 10 one page Zippy vignettes.

Both comic books retail for $2.25 and are available by mail for $2.75 each (post paid) from Last Gasp, P.O. Box 212, Berkeley, California 94701. Since **Young Lust** is for "adults only" be sure to include a signed statement of age with your order.

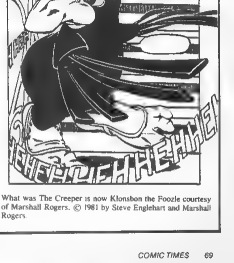
ECLIPSE

The contents for the first issue of **Eclipse**, Eclipse Enterprises new bi-monthly magazine have been finalized. A Paul Gulacy painting will be the cover for **Eclipse** 1 which will contain 52 pages of original comics. Featured will be the full 19-page Superman-Creeper teamup by Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers originally intended for **DC Comics Presents**. The Creeper character has been substantially altered by Marshall Rogers and is now called Klonsbon

by Eclipse. © 1981 Max Allen Collins and Terry Beatty.

the Foozle. Editor Dean Mullaney reports that, "both Clark Kent and Jack Ryder are women in the final story." Also slated for **Eclipse** 1 is "Amber III", a 6 page, non-series story by Jim Starline, "Chimera" a 10 page silent, comic story done in full pencils by P. Craig Russell that originally appeared as a limited edition portfolio which has been out of print for 5 years, the first 8 page installment of Ms. Tree (sic) a female private eye series by Allen Collins and Terry Beatty, "Death" a Woody Allenish non-series story by Howard Cruze (**Barefootz**), "Cartoon Man" another non-series story by Marc Hempel and "Loose Hips Sink Ships" a 1 page story by Chris Browne (frequent **Playboy** contributor) and Trina Robbins set in the radio studio of Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre.

Marshall Rogers and Steve Englehart will appear in every issue of **Eclipse**. The two 25 page stories originally intended as **Madame Xanadu**



What was The Creeper is now Klonsbon the Foozle courtesy of Marshall Rogers. © 1981 by Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers

features have been reworked and 10 additional pages have been added. The now 60 page story will appear in 10 page installments beginning with **Eclipse** 2. Englehart is currently writing two new 60 page stories, each of which will spotlight a new character. These stories will be serialized after the conclusion of the **Madame Xanadu** stories.

Also in**Eclipse** 2 will be the second Ms. Tree story (which will run in 8 page episodes through issue 6), an 8 page funny animal story written and illustrated by Steve Leialoha, the first **Ragamuffins** story by Don McGregor (no artist has been announced) and the beginning of Trina Robbins's adaptation of the 1902 Sax Rohmer novel **Dope.** The story will appear in eight 4 page installments and according to Trina, "This story has everything: a beautiful, red-haired actress addicted to drugs, a mysterious Egyptian soothsayer named Kazmah, a 'Dragon Lady'-esque drug dealer named Mrs. Sin — an exotically beautiful Cuban Jewess described as wearing the highest heels anyone has ever seen, her husband Wah Sin, the brains behind the drug syndicate, a classically Fu Manchu-esque Chinese with one eye . . . not to mention scenes in opium dens in Limehouse, opium dreams and kidnappings!"

Sabre 1 is going into a third printing. Four new pages have been added by Don McGregor and Paul Gulacy for this "special edition" which will be packaged in the identical trade paperback format as Eclipse's **Stewart the Rat.** The book will retail for $6.95 and will also feature a full color cover.

Jim Starlin's new **Metamorphosis Odyssey** graphic album book is called **The Price** and will also be in the same format as **Stewart the Rat.** Starlin has painted 2 new full color paintings which will appear as the book's front and back covers.

One reason for the delay of **Stewart the Rat** was that Eclipse rejected the initial 10,000 copy print run and forced the printer to print the book a second time. "While the first printing of **Stewart** was of good quality, it wasn't up to the standards that are associated with the Eclipse line of graphic books," comments publisher Mullaney, "We sent the entire print run back for reprinting and the book is now available in the stores."

Rich Buranna has been named as the official art director for Eclipse Enterprises . . . Howard Cruze will be a regular contributor to **Eclipse.**". **Detectives, Inc.** has received favorable reviews in such non-comics oriented publications as **Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine** and **Mystery Magazine.**

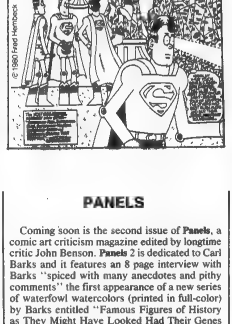
FANTACO

Fantaco has just issued a second printing of Fred Hembeck's first book, *The Best of Dateline: G!!?#* originally published by Eclipse Enterprises. Fred Hembeck has redone the color separations for the covers and 8 pages have been added to this book to offset the 50¢ increase in cover price to $2.50.

Due in February from Fantaco is *60's Funnies 1* ($1.25), a 32 page comic look at the 60's edited by Larry Shell featuring James Bond, Jim Morrison, Soupy Sales and Bob Dylan in stories by John Pound, Steve Bissette, Tom Yeats, Rick Veitch, George Erhling, Scott Shaw, Fred Hembeck and Brad Whiting. Also due out in February is *The Hembeck Scrapbook*, a 48 page collection of his rarest and most obscure material. This 8½ x 11 book will retail for $2.50.

Just out is issue 3 of the now bi-monthly *Smilin' Ed Comics* which is an all horror issue written by Skulan and Vezina with art by Vezina and *Alien Encounters* 1 which features a cover painting by George Chastain, a back cover illustration by Tom Sutton and a centerspread by Rudy Nebres. Also included are stories by Tom Yeats, Mike Zeck, S.R. Bissette, Rich Larson, Tim Boxell, Steve Stiles, George Erhling, Fred Hembeck, Bill Kelley, Howard Cruse and Larry Shell.

Future releases include *Zany* 1 (75¢), a collection of new Fred Hembeck material in comic book format and *Splatter Movies*, Fantaco's first non-comics publication. *Splatter Movies* will explore the "gruesome genre" of films from its beginning to the present. It is written by John McCarty who is a frequent *Cinefantastique* contributor.



PANELS

Coming soon is the second issue of **Panels**, a comic art criticism magazine edited by longtime critic John Benson. **Panels** 2 is dedicated to Carl Barks and it features an 8 page interview with Barks "spiced with many anecdotes and pithy comments" the first appearance of a new series of waterfowl watercolors (printed in full-color) by Barks entitled "Famous Figures of History as They Might Have Looked Had Their Genes Gotten Mixed Up with Waterfowl" and the first reprinting of a number of cartoon illustrations that Barks did for **The Calgary Eye-Opener** in the thirties.

Also in **Panels** 2 is an article on **Tarzan** artist Jesse Marsh by Alex Toth (presented in Toth's own distinctive lettering) and "Is War Hell?" an illustrated analysis of the political stance of Harvey Kurtzman's **Two Fisted Tales** work by Benson.

The first issue of **Panels** (containing interviews with Will Eisner and Jules Feiffer about the Spirit and a critical complaint by Zippy the Pinhead creator, Bill Griffith) is still available from John Benson, 205 West 80th Street, New York, NY 10024. As of this writing, the cover price for issue 2 has not been finalized.

FICTIONEER BOOKS

Fictioneer Books has just issued a limited first edition of the long-delayed Don McGregor prose book, **The Variable Syndrome.** In addition to the previously unpublished science fiction novella, "The Variable Syndrome," the 144 page, 5¼ x 8½ book contains the full version of **Inside Detectives, Inc.**, a small portion of which was excerpted in **The Comic Times** 4. This behind-the-scenes look at the production of **Detectives, Inc.** also contains a lengthy piece on the Work Made for Hire contract which the major comic book publishers force their creative personnel to sign. Also included as part of **Inside Detectives, Inc.** are original **Detectives** script pages and reproductions of the initial stages of **Detectives** artwork.

The Variable Syndrome is printed on heavy (#75) vellum stock and sports a full color, laminated cover painting by Walt Simonson. It may be ordered for $10.00 plus $1.00 postage by sending a check or money order to Krafthaus, Fictioneer Books Ltd., Screamer Mountain, Clayton, Georgia 30525.

A few copies of McGregor's first prose book, **Dragonflame & Other Bedtime Nightmares** is still available for $7.00, plus $1.00 postage and handling. When ordering either book, be sure to make all checks or money orders payable to Krafthaus.

THE STRIP SCENE

A comic strip based upon the hit TV show **Dallas** will soon debut. It will be written by Jim Lawrence (**Buck Rogers**) and drawn by Ron Harris (who has worked on the Hanna Barbara comic book line). No date has been set for the strip's premier, although according to one newspaper account, 40 papers have already agreed to carry the strip . . . **The Lone Ranger** strip by Cary Bates and Gil Kane has been delayed due to the delay in releasing the feature

movie **The Legend of the Lone Ranger** . . . Al Williamson is replacing Alredo Alcala on the **Star Wars** strip. Archie Goodwin will remain as the writer . . . Russ Heath is inking Stan Lynde's **Latigo** dailies, although Lynde is still inking the Sundays . . . Jerry Conwav is scripting **World's Greatest Superheroes** over a plot by Paul Levitz . . . Some papers are no longer carrying an individual credit line on **The Incredible Hulk** strip. "Marvel Comics" is credited with producing the strip . . . Ramona Fradon recently took over the **Brenda Starr** strip

AARDVAARK-VANAHEIM

Just out is the first volume of *Swords of Cerebus* reprinting the first 4 Cerebus the Aardvaark stories which are long out of print. Also included in *Swords of Cerebus* is a color, wraparound cover and a new 8 page story written and finished by Dave Sim over layouts by Marshall Rogers. This 104 page book carries a $5.00 cover price. Succeeding volumes will be issued on a three-times-yearly basis.

Cerebus 22 is entitled "The Death of Elrod" as the Captain Cockroach and Bunky adventure continues while the albino swordsman meets his maker.

Cerebus 23 will carry a $1.50 cover price, but will be the first *Cerebus* issue to have a photo-separated cover. "It's possibly a small consolation," says author Sim," for the book now costing $1.50, but it was the only thing we could do to warrant the increase. More pages was just impossible on a monthly schedule."

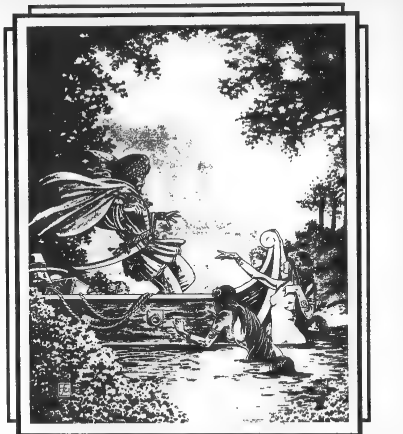
FLYING BUTTRESS PUBLICATIONS

Rick Marschall will supervise a revised reprinting of the 1940's biography, *Milton Caniff, the Rembrandt of the Comic Strip* to be published by Flying Buttress. The book will be almost exclusively devoted to Caniff's *Terry and the Pirates* period and will contain (in addition to the original text) a specially chosen 8 page portfolio of *Terry* art, an introduction written by Caniff and a study of the evolution and world-wide influence of Caniff's characoscuro style of drawing by Rick Marschall. No price has been finalized for the 64 page 8½x11 book, but a 500 copy special clothbound edition (signed and numbered by Caniff) is planned.

STAMPART

Available from STAMPART are *Fog City Comics* 1-3. *Fog City* features the work of Canadian underground artists George Metzger (*Moondog*), Rand Holmes (*Harold Hedd*) and Brent Boates (*Forbidden Knowledge*). *Fog City* 1 looks at the funny animal genre, issue 2 is a tribute to Science Fantasy comics and Wally Wood and *Fog City* 3 is a double-sized issue which in addition to regular features by Holmes and Boates, reprints 3 early Metzger strips strips (from 1966 and 1967) from the long out of print fanzines, *Fantasy Illustrated* and *Star Studded Comics*.

Fog City Comics ($1.00 for issues 1 and 2 and $2.00 for issue 3) is available from STAMPART, P.O. Box 48385, Bentall Station, Vancouver, CANADA, V7X 1A2.



Seven Dreams of Sinbad

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Plate 4

New and upcoming 6 plate, black and white limited portfolios from Pacific comics include **Seven Dreams of Sinbad** by Frank Cirocco ($20.00, with a die-cast cover displaying an additional color plate), **The Forgotten Beasts of Eld** by Alicia Austin based on the novel of the same name by Patricia McKillip ($15.00, signed and numbered edition of 1500 copies) and **Lela Dowling's Unicorns**, a companion piece to her **Dragons** portfolio ($12.00, 1200 copy signed and numbered edition).

Elfquest: A Gallery of Portraits has sold out its 2000 copy printing, making it one of the fastest selling portfolios ever released to the speciality market.

* * *

RAW

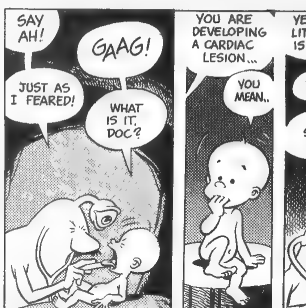
Just out is the second issue of **RAW**, The Graphix Magazine for Damned Intellectuals. The tabloid-sized magazine (10½ x 14¼) features "City of Terror Bubble Gum Cards" (gum included), Chapter One ("The Sheik") of Art Spiegelman's adaptation of **Maus: A Survivor's Tale**, "The Clock Strikes" by Joost Swarte, an essay on "The News As Entertainment" by David Levy and many other features. **RAW** is available by mail for $4.00 plus $1.00 first class postage and handling from RAW Books, 27 Greene Street, New York, NY 10013.

NEW MEDIA

The lineup for the first issue of **Adventure Illustrated**, one of New Media's 2 quarterly comic magazines has been set. The first issue will congain the first episode of an as yet untitled science fiction serial by Dough Moench and Bill Sienkiewicz, Hosea Ransom — a western series by Peter Gillis and Alan Weiss, a non-series story by Moench and Paul Gulacy (which may be a humor story) and possibly a preview of a special project being prepared for New Media by Pat Broderick. The cover painting will be by Paul Gulacy. **Adventure Illustrated** is scheduled to debut in early April.

The contents for **Adventure**'s companion magazine, **Fantasy Illustrated** are still being worked out. However the first issue will definitely contain the first installment of Alexander Risk, a new detective series set in the 1940's by Don McGregor. Risk is a detective who thinks he's Sherlock Holmes. Editor Gillis explains that Alexander Risk will be " . . . a combination of the Holmes-Watson relationship and the William Powell —Myrna Loy relationship from the **Thin Man** movies." The first story is entitled "The Hound of Hell Theory." No artist has been chosen for the series. P. Craig Russell is preparing a watercolor painting for the cover of **Fantasy Illustrated** 1.

Contrary to previous announcements, Grass Green will not be editing **Star Studded Comics**,



Love is a pain in the. . . . A selection from the second episode of "The Pipsqueak Papers," Wally Wood's ode to romance From **Woodwork**, © 1981 Wally Wood.

New Media's fan art showcase. Although the book is only scheduled for "the indeterminate future," according to Gillis, Carol Kalish is sifting through material submitted to the magazine. They are interested in finished fan material on almost any subject and if a piece is selected for publication, the writer and the artist will receive a minimal payment for their work. It should be stressed that they are only interested in the best material available. To submit enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope and write to: Star Studded Comics, 31½ Roberts Road, #2, Cambridge, MA 02138.

AND . . . .

As reported last issue, Quality Comic Art Productions has also published 6 daily comic strip reprint collections of daily strips. Released under the bi-monthly title **Comic Art Showcase** are **Buz Sawyer** Books I & II (1944) by Roy Crane, **Sky Masters of the Space Force** by Wally Wood and Jack Kirby (1947) **Rip Kirby** by Alex Raymond and **Secret Agent Corrigan** Books I & II (1967) by Archie Goodwin and Al Williamson. All of these books are priced at $4.00, plus $1.00 postage and handling, except for **Sky Masters** by Wood and Kirby which costs $5.00.

The address to order any of these publications is: Quality Comic Art Productions, 20 Burke Drive, Dept. 3, Buffalo, New York 14215.

The First Kingdom 13 by Jack Katz with an introduction by Russ Manning was recently released by Bud Plant. Other new and/or upcoming projects from Bud Plant is Jack Katz's limited edition, 6 plate **The First Kingdom Portfolio** and a 72 page index and pictorial representation of **The Art of Alex Toth.**

* * *

The first issue of **Woodwork**, a magazine devoted to reprinting the artwork of Wally Wood was recently published by Bill Crouch Jr. Crouch intends to publish a series of Wood collections and his next project will be **The Wally Wood Sketchbook**. All the contents of **Woodwork** 1 originally appeared in the out of print fanzine, **Witzend**. Reprinted are "Pipsqueak Papers" (a cartoon lampoon of love), "The World of the Wizard King" (a "picto-fiction" story written and illustrated by Wood), "The Rejects" (a science fiction parody) and a collection of **Witzend** covers and full page illustrations.

The 52-page **Woodworks** is printed on quality white paper, sports 2 color covers by Wood and is priced at $5.00. You may order **Woodwork** through the mail from: Sea Gate Distributors, Box 177, Brooklyn, New York 11224. Be sure to include 75¢ for postage and handling.

* * *

Ken Pierce is publishing the first of a series of **Modesty Blaise** reprint volumes. Included in the 64 page square bound book will be two complete episodes "Top Traitor" and "The Vikings" (Modesty episodes 7 & 8) by Peter O'Donnell and Jim Holdaway from the early years of the strip. Cat Yronwode has prepared a short introduction and a complete story index to the **Modesty Blaise** strip. The book is priced at $5.95.

* * *

The Harlan Ellison-Mike Kaluta Shadow graphic novel being published by Fantagraphics has been officially delayed. Originally due out in the Fall of 1980, **Dragon Shadow** is in a state of limbo until Ellison completes the script.

Fantagraphics has announced the preparation of another comic book album, **Children of the Night-Tide** with the official signing of Jan Strnad. The book will consist of 2 stories, written by Strnad: "The Goblin-Child" a horror/fantasy tale set in Medieval England and "Sea Dragon," Mike Kaluta and Dennis Fujitake have been announced as the artists who will illustrate the stories. Kaluta will be painting the book's front cover and Fujitake has complete a painting that will be used as the back cover.

* * *

Visions 2 is the latest issue of a showcase magazine for fan artwork and comic strips published by Lamar Waldron. Featured in this issue is work by Rod Whigman, Bob Burden, Michael Hoffman and Waldron. Also in **Visions** 2 are full page illustrations by Paul Gulacy and Marshall Rogers and 2 Neal Adams sketches which are finished and inked by Waldron. **Visions** is a quarterly magazine that is priced at $2.75.

* * *

The new jeff Jones collection, **Yesterday's Lily** is now available from Dragon's Dream. The 70 page volume features many full-color fantasy, science fiction, mythological and historical paintings, many of which are collected for the first time in book form. Also included in **Yesterday's Lily** are a number of pencil, line, and wash single illustrations, 3 examples of Jones' comic book work ("Luce," "The Bridge" and "Spirit of '76), a short interview with the artist conducted by Eric Kimball and an introduction by Irma Kurtz. Printed on quality stock, **Yesterday's Lily** retails for $8.95.

* * *

The Comic Strip News is a weekly comic strip reprint magazine published by Quality Comic Art Productions which, "reprints the finest (in) comic strips, both current and older strips. Included in the present lineup are: **Secret Agent Corrigan** (daily-1968) by Archie Goodwin and Al Williamson, **Dickie Dare** (daily-1933) by Milton Caniff, **Tales of the Green Beret** (daily and Sunday-1966) by Joe Kubert, **Little Orphan Annie** (daily-1933) by Harold Gray, **Buz Sawyer** (daily-1946) by Roy Crane, **Mandrake the Magician** (daily-1936) by Lee Falk and an uncredited artist (Phil Davis?) and **Wonder Woman** (daily-1936) by Charles Moulton and H.G. Peter. The current adventure strips appearing in each issue of **The Comic Strip News** are the daily and Sunday installments of **Steve Canyon** by Milton Caniff, **Dick Tracy** by Chester Gould, Rick Fletcher and Max Allen Collins and **Star Wars** by Archie Goodwin and Alfredo P. Alcala and the daily episodes of **Latigo** by Stan Lynde, **Rip Kirby** by John Prentice and Fred Dickenson, **Apartment 3-G** by Alex Kotzky, **Annie** by Leonard Starr and **Modesty Blaise** by Peter O'Donnell and Enrique Romero. The tabloid-sized, **Comic Strip News** is published on white paper, and retails for $2.00. Subscriptions are available at the following rates: 13 weeks for $24.00, 26 weeks for $45.00 and 52 weeks for $85.00.

* * *

Carol Serling, widow of the late Rod Serling, will be the associate publisher and consulting editor of **The Twilight Zone Magazine**, a mass market suspense magazine debuting February 15. The first issue will contain stories by Harlan Ellison, Joyce Carol Oates, an interview with Stephen King and a preview of John Carpenter's new film **Escape from New York.**

SON OF PINBALL VS THE SPACE INVADERS

Or: The Wonderful World of Videogames

by Bill Kunkel

In the brave new world of 1980 you can fly like Superman, journey through the bowels of an enchanted dungeon or save the Earth from an invasion by extraterrestials—and you can do it all without ever leaving your home. Those hardy souls actually willing to travel to the nearest arcade can experience wilder, even more decadent thrills. Such wonders as these, and many more, have become available through the medium of the videogame, the marvelous melding of television and micro-chip computer technology.

It all started innocently enough, with Atari's *Pong*, the now classic (and long passé) game that utilized a pair of rectangular paddles and a tiny, white ball to create a video simulation of table tennis. *Pong* was a smash not only in arcades, but in candy stores, bars and bowling alleys, where quarter-wielding patrons lined up for a shot at a game that was not only exciting but truly *different*. Its astonishing success led a few forward-looking companies to consider the possibility of producing similar games for home use.

The early home arcades were of the "hard-wired" variety. These systems employed tiny "dedicated chips" on which built-in game programs were imprinted. But within a year these limited-program systems were rendered obsolete by the introduction of programmable machines onto the market. Though more expensive than the hard-wired units, the programmables held one insurmountable advantage over them in that their manufacturers could continue to offer a theoretically-unlimited number of game cartridges (software) for use with their hardware.

Programmables come in two basic types. There are computers that play videogames, in addition to keeping the family books, teaching Junior how to add, paper training the dog, etc. (such as Bally's Home Arcade); and there are those that are strictly for playing videogames (such as the popular *Atari* system).

The home arcade field is today dominated by four manufacturers. Atari, with its emphasis on arcade clasics like *Breakout* and *Space Invaders*, continues to be the top seller. They have subsequently added a pair of higher-powered computers to their line, but for videogame fanciers, their relatively inexpensive home arcade system is the machine of choice. The reason? Put simply, Atari offers more quality game cartridges than anyone else (in addition, a new company, Activision, has begun producing excellent game programs for use on the Atari unit). Magnavox, the first company to manufacture a home videogame system, *Odyssey*, now offers the programmable *Odyssey*^{2}, which specializes in excellent video versions of professional team and solo sports. Bally, with a fairly even mix of arcade and sports oriented programs, is the computer-freak's fave. Its keyboard and computing power enables them to tinker with old programs and create new ones. In fact, Bally owners have their own fanzine, the *Arcadian*, in which gamers discuss programming and tactics. The most recent entry into the home videogame sweepstakes is Mattel's *Intellivision*, which offers sports and strategy games a full notch above anything else in the field.

Because so many videogame fans are youngsters suckled on *Star Wars* games with overtly science-fiction and fantasy elements are extremely popular. Herewith is a look at some of the better programs available on home systems:

SPACE INVADERS (Atari/CX-2632) is there anyone, anywhere, who hasn't heard of *Space Invaders*, the most popular arcade attraction since pinball? Why, this game, with its phalanxes of downward plodding aliens dropping shitloads of death-dealing photon torpedoes to the inexorable "thump-thump-thump" sound effects has become a veritable pop-culture icon!

SI stories are already legion, both here and in Japan (where the game was developed by Taito Corp.). In the Land of the Rising Sun, whole mobs of school-aged kids jammed coffee houses instead of classrooms, so eager to feed the invaders their lunch money that the Nipponese version of the PTA called for the game to be outlawed! In the USA candy stores noticed that business boomed once they moved out the pinball machines and moved in the newfangled videogame, while the 7-11 chain has instituted a nationwide program of installing *SI* machines in their stores. It seems a study discovered the not-too-surprising fact that crowed shops are less likely to be robbed than empty ones—and anyplace with a *SI* game doesn't stay empty for long.

Atari now owns the exclusive rights to the home version of this videogame classic and is even sponsoring a nationwide *SI* Tournament to be held this fall (the streamlined Atari version, by the way is slightly different from the Midway *SI* arcade model, in that the UFO's which periodically sail across the top of the playfield are always 200 points, regardless of your shot ration).

SI has even spawned a score of imitators (see arcade section reviews of *Cosmic Alien* and *Claxian*) whose popularity has, in some cases, eclipsed the original.

SI is the rarest of games the basics of which can be grasped in seconds, while mastery of its subtleties can take a lifetime. However, should you find yourself becoming too proficient at the standard version, you can try it with Atari's built-in "difficulty factor" (in this case, your cannon becomes twice as large, making it a much easier target for the cosmic creepers and, by Atari's reckoning, cutting your average score in half). and, as Atari offers 112 variations on the basic program, ranging from a version with invisible aliens (they only materialize when hit, and then for only an instant) to one with zig-zagging bombs (much like trying to run in between raindrops) there's something here to challenge even the best of players.

SPACE BATTLE (Mattel's Intellivision/ 2612) Mattel's first non-sports program is also its first offering where you can play without a partner, a science fiction-oriented game that blends the best of the space war genre with a strategic element that elevates *Space Battle* to a place of honor in the video-game pantheon.

This dual-level program begins with a tactical radar display screen appearing on the playfield, in the center of which is the GAMER'S mothership. The radar screen charts the approach of several alien fighter squadrons from deep space. The player then decides which of the converging alien squads poses the most immediate threat and dispatches one of his three, color-coded fighter groups from his mothership to engage them.

The game at this point switches to a cockpit perspective whereby, employing a sighting-cursor, the player opens fire on the attacking aliens. The invaders in turn, launch torpedoes and each time your cursor is hit, it represents the destruction of one of your group's three ships.

When under attack from several directions it may become neccessary to engage more than one enemy squadron at a time. In this event, the computer will take control of your secondary fighter group. But the computer is a pretty lackluster pilot, willing to sacrifice one ship for three, a depletion rate too costly to be tolerated in all but the most extreme situations. Your ultimate aim is to destroy all incoming alien air craft before they reach your mothership.

Words, however, can scarcely do justice to the marvelous audio and visual effects that Mattel's magicians have wrought. The alien

ships (which bear a striking resemblance to *Battlestar Galactica*'s Cylon Raiders) stalk you against a flickering background of multi-colored stars, diving, climbing and arcing through the void with awe-inspiring verisimilitude. Mattel's mastery is such that you can even score "chain-reaction" hits by blasting into the middle of a tightly-grouped enemy formation. The flack from a single strike can then destroy up to three enemy aircraft in sequence.

As the aliens close in, your mothership will sound a strident warning claxon which gets louder as the enemy draws nearer.

For a realistic space game, this is as good as it gets. Very highly recommended.

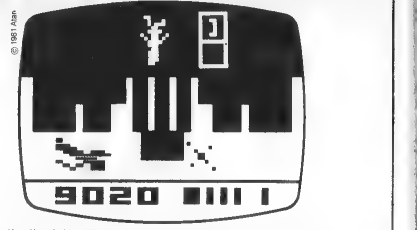
SUPERMAN (ATARI/CX2631) Another of Atari's brilliant innovations, *Superman* allows the videogamer to play the role of a superhero in a manner comic book fans have dreamed of for decades.

You begin the game as Clark Kent, on your way to the Daily Planet when, before your eyes, Metropolis Bridge is blown apart. Spotting Lex Luthor and five henchman escaping from the disaster scene, you make for a convenient phone booth where the dramatic transformation into the Man of Steel occurs. You then send your super-powered surrogate streaking into the sky and commence your timed assignment: capture Luthor and his gang, throw them in jail, and reassemble the three sections into which the bridge was blown. You then return to the phone booth, change identities once again and, as Clark, head for the Planet to file your story.

Metropolis itself is divided into block-like sections which appear on screen one at a time as you move across them. When Supes flies off the border of one block, the adjacent square into which he travels automatically appears on screen. Part of the challenge is memorizing the city's complex layout, complete with shortcuts (such as the subway, which runs underneath the entire town).

Along the way, Luthor will periodically hurl kryptonite bombs at the Man of Steel, rendering him powerless until he locates and makes physical contact with Lois Lane (don't tell me it's weird, I already know). There's also a helicopter that flits occasionally into view, trying to help out our hero but usually succeeding in only creating more chaos.

As for Superman himself, he not only flies and has super strength (and one downright *weird* relationship with Lois Lane), but X-Ray Vision as well. By depressing the "action button" on the Atari joystick controller and pointing the joystick in the direction you wish to look, each of the four blocks adjacent to the one Superman occupies become visible. This is an especially inventive touch.



Up . Up And Away! Here's the first of the superhero video games—**SUPERMAN**, from Atari.

Superman is the sort of program videogame manufacturers should try more often. Any comics fan playing this game will immediately begin dreaming of similar programs for other superheroes. How about a Spider-Man game, for example, in which the amazing wall-crawler web-slings around N.Y.C. in search of, say, the Green Goblin? Or what about a Hulk game in which one player controls the movements of old Greenskin while the other plays the Thunderbolt Ross role with missles, tanks and jets at his disposal?

ADVENTURE (ATARI/CO11402-13) And now for something *completely* different . . . This is the first pre-programmed cartridge to employ the trappings of the enormously popular role-playing game, *Dungeons & Dragons*. Employing a cursor as your on-screen surrogate, you traverse symbolically-depicted terrain patrolled by dragons (who, unhappily look a little too much like ducks) and explore the catacomb-like bowels beneath each of three individually-colored castles, plagued all the while by such nuisances as a bat who swoops in and steals your sword/castle key/whatever at the *most* inopportune times. For each castle there's a color-coded key, and they're liable to be found anywhere—right out in the open, or in the middle of a fog-shrouded maze. Your ultimate goal is to find the Enchanted Chalice and return it to the Golden Castle.

Of course, there's a catch: you can carry only one item at a time. In order to open, say, the Black Castle, you'll need the black key. However, if you're carrying the black key, that means you aren't toting a sword. Guess what happens when, unarmed, you run into a dragon. It isn't pretty.

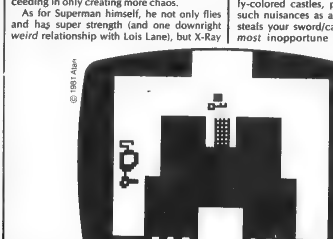
This is obviously not your traditional videogame, and it's not going to be everyone's cup of tea. Those who like it, however, *really* like it. *Adventure* is unique in that's it's open-ended, there is no time limit and you don't compete against another player. When your adventure ends—successfully and crowned with glory, or ignominiously, in the belly of a reptile—it ends. Definitely worth a look.

INVADERS FROM HYPERSPACE (Magnavox Odyssey^2 /AK9414) In the twin systems of Terien and Lorien, intergalactic war has raged for eons. Both four-planet solar systems are under constant assault from alien saucers. One player represents Terien, the other, Lorien, and the battle cruisers they man are the twin systems' sole defense.

Now follow this closely, it gets kinda confusing: each time a blast of laser fire (from either a battle cruiser or saucer) strikes a sun or planet, it causes that sun or planet to change color, moving it through a five-color sequence. When a player loses his battle cruiser to alien fire, he can launch a new one only from a heavenly body of the same color as his previous ship.

The winner is the first player to take out ten saucers, making this one of the rare space war games where two players are not firing directly on one another, but are actually acting in concert to see who can get ten kills first. Sometimes, however, *neither* player wins. If the saucers conquer all the planets (something they accomplish by turning them to their color), the aliens have beaten you both.

Invaders From Hyperspace is a damn good try and all that, but there's simply not enough meat on this game's bones. On the other hand, there's no lack of flashing colors, bright lights, explosions, et al, making it ideal fare for occasional play.



A representation of Atari's **ADVENTURE** game. The figure on the left is a computer representation of a dragon. The goal of the game is to use the key to open the castle door before the dragon does nasty things to your body.

COSMIC CONFLICT (Magnavox /A)9411) From the cockpit of your star fighter, Centurion, you go a 'hunting through the firmament using your joystick controller to position the laser gunsight, in search of ten enemy transports and the five Imperial Star Fighters riding shotgun on them. The transports are unarmed, virtual sitting ducks. The tie-fighter-like Imperials, however, are a different business entirely. Equipped with warp drive, they materialize on screen and streak toward you from a bewildering array of angles. You can either take evasive action from the Imperials or you can fight. If you choose to do battle, though, do it quickly, for once an Imperial draws within firing range, it never misses.

You begin your journey with 1000 "megajoules" of energy. Each second of routine space flight costs 1 megajoule, every burst of laser fire uses up 10 megajoules, and 50 units are spent whenever the computer is forced to engage defense shields.

When *Cosmic Conflict* first appeared on the videogame market, it was a top-of-the-line space war progam. Since then, the del-

© 1981 Atari

The battle screen of **ASTEROIDS**, the current champion of the arcade games. The object of the game is to destroy as many asteroids as you can, before they (or the enemy ship) destroy you.

uge of super-sophisticated programs along similar lines have made it seem just a trifle pedestrian (if such a word can ever be applied in conjunction with laser wars in outer space!)

IN THE ARCADE

With the advent of the seminal *Space Invaders*, the whole coin operated industry (the trade that encompasses everything into which we deposit coins in exchange for entertainment) was turned on its ear. Within less than three years the videogame has become the dominant force in the industry, overturning juke boxes, pinball machines and air-hockey tables in its cosmic wake.

The October '80 issue of *Re-Play* magazine, a trade publication catering to the coin-op industry, publisher Ed Adlum writes:

> "Did you ever pause and consider that *Asteroids* alone working on a $170 weekly collection gross times the 60,000 of them built, adds up to over $10 million in coins per week? Consider that there are probably over 300,000 *Space Invaders* type games in the world (counting legitimate models and those knockoffs) and add up those numbers. That's only two of the prime machines on the market and if any accountant out there wants to estimate the weekly gross of the whole industry, I'd love to see the numbers . . ."

He ain't just whistling *Pennies from Heaven*, either. The space-war type videogame is the single most important genre in the coin-op field. In the "Top 20" of the so-called "Upright Videos" (the standard format videogames found in arcades) are listed no fewer than eleven games of the space-war types, including two models of *Space Invaders* (regular and deluxe) and two virtually indistinguishable variations on the *SI* format, *Cosmic Alien* and *Galaxian*.

What follows is a brief run-down on some of the better space-war games found exclusively in arcades, along with the company who manufactures the unit. (Midway is the name used by Bally on their arcade machines. Bally, incidentally, has just been purchased by Astrovision.)

ASTEROIDS (Atari) Numero uno right now among the uprights. Players command a triangular space ship and blast away at the rocklike debris floating through the ether. Each time a large asteroid is hit (worth 20 pts.), it is rendered into two smaller pieces (worth 50 pts. each). These secondary bits of space flotsam are each, in turn, transformed into two even smaller bits of celestial rock (worth 100 pts) after being fired upon. Each asteroid, therefore, is ultimately rendered into eight pieces, with are then permanently disintegrated under fire. Periodically, an enemy craft saunters into view, forcing your ship to engage it in battle. Your ship is maneuvered by means of a thrust control.

This is the current game of choice among the arcade cognoscenti. Look for Atari to issue it in cartridge format for their home systems in time for Christmas.

GALAXIAN (Midway) and **COSMIC ALIEN** (Universal) These are the interchangable *SI* knockoffs I mentioned in the introduction. Essentially *SI* with a fascinating variation—these aliens, who possess these multi-colored batwings, swoop down in groups of three, dropping batches of bombs as they go.

Admittedly a rip-off of *SI*, but the gimmick makes it a refreshing change from the original. Owners of the Bally Home Arcade are praying daily for a home version of *Galaxian*, since Atari now owns sole rights to the home *SI*.

STARHAWK (Cinematronics) Space ships, rendered in exquisite, complex line drawings streak on screen from a dizzying series of angles, while players try to set their sights and blow the swiftly moving starships into oblivion.

When hit, the luminous configurations shatter like multi-colored crystal pick-up-sticks. Many space war afficionados rate this as their favorite videogame. It's also one of the top twenty grossers among video uprights. Recommended.

MAGICAL SPOT (Universal) Yet another interesting variation on *SI*. A ship from the far-off "Solar Plexus System" contaminates the screen with an army of invading space-insects. These little buggers grow from grubs to larvae while you watch, and descend upon our hapless planet intent on an infestation even Black Flag couldn't cope with. Earth's only hope for survival lies in destroying these cosmic cockroaches before they land. One laser blast, however, ain't enough to off these durable little suckers. Once wounded, they regenerate into full-grown larvae which can then land and form cocoons. When seven such cocoons have landed, they link-up, take off into space, and return as even deadlier Ultramoths.

STARFIRE This is a "sitdown" machine. Players actually enter inside a booth-type enclosure and in this world of their own, rake the heavens with laser fire.

The very nature of an arcade game dictates that it should be simple enough that even first-time players have a chance at some success. A game that requires you to invest several dollars in quarters before it can be played with any competence has obvious drawbacks. *Starfire* is more than slightly complicated, and you can be fairly certain that your first four or five games will be a total waste. Once mastered however, many feel that this is one of the best space-war videogames around. Advocates argue that the game's sitdown format makes them really *feel* like Captain Video or Han Solo. Which after all, is what it's all about.

BATTLE ZONE VIDEO (Attari) I haven't personally played this one yet, but reports are that Atari has yet another winner in the space-war sweepstakes.

Players man space-tanks and do interstellar battle with an enemy super-tank, which can be charted by means of a radar display. The game boasts Atari's new "Quadriscan" display system, 3-Dimensional graphics and super sound-effects that include the playing of the '1812 Overture' at appropriate moments.

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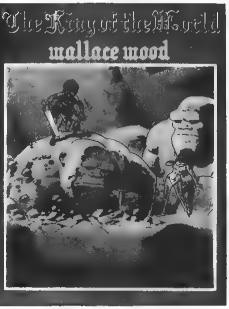

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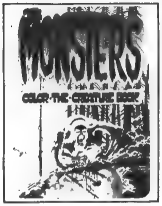

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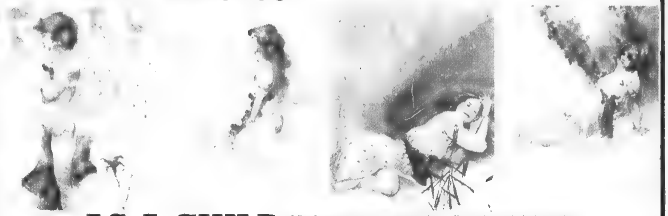

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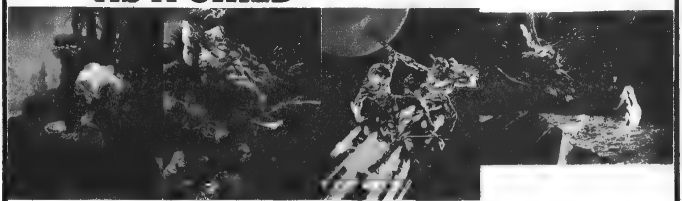

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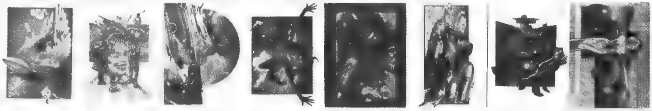

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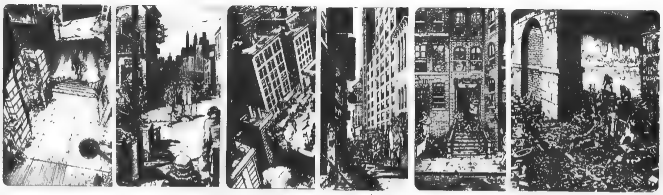

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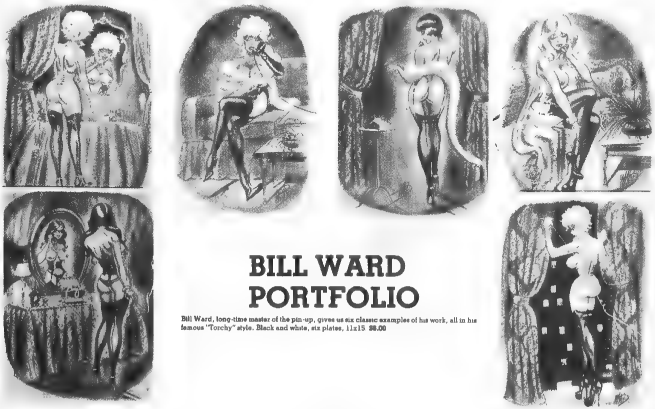

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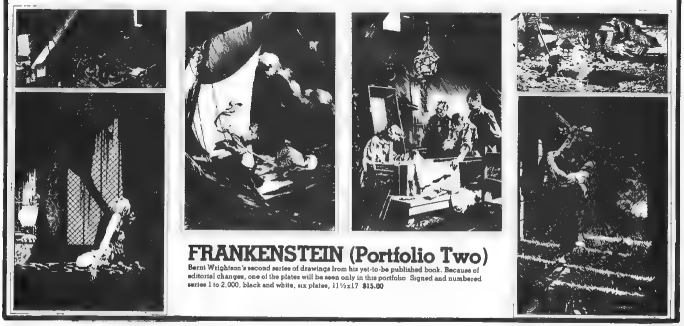

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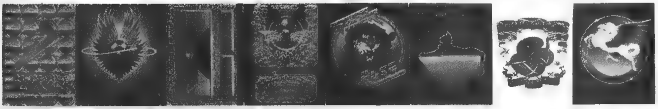

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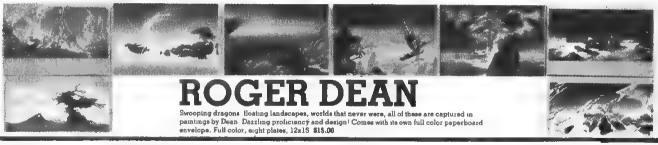

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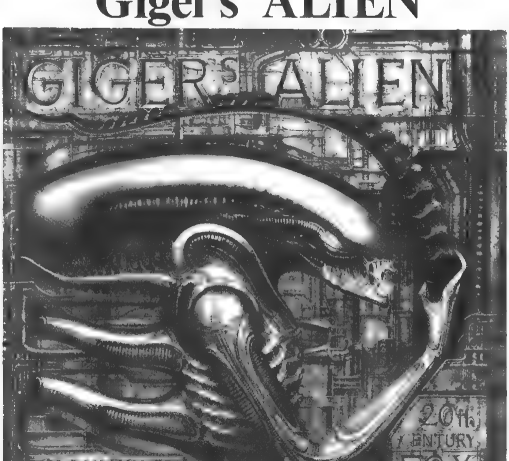

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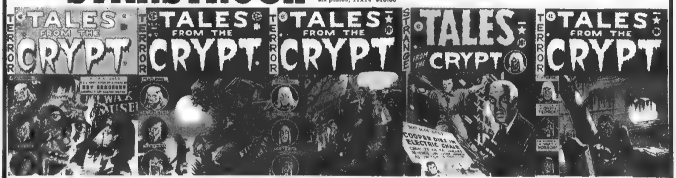

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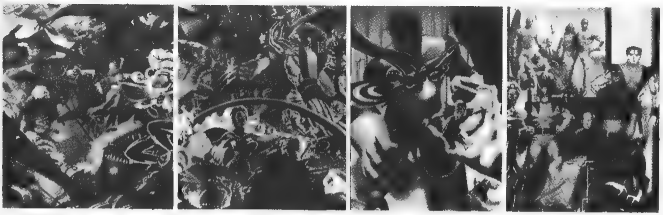

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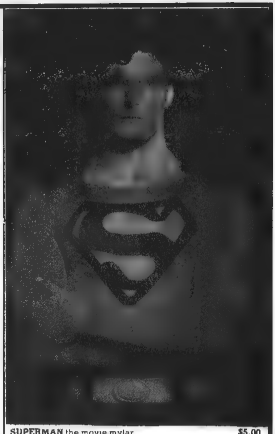

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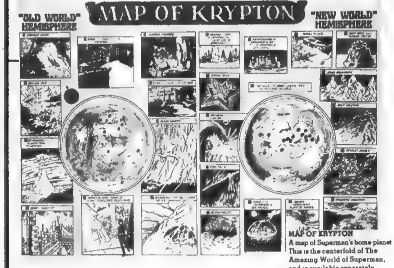

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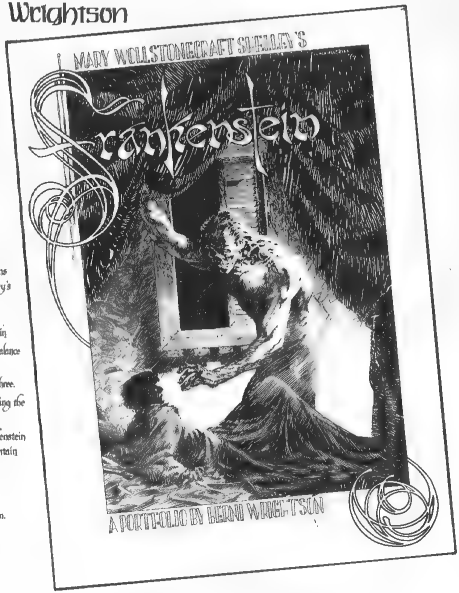

With this portfolio, Berni Wrightson celebrates the completion of his illustrations for a forthcoming edition of Mary Shelley's

Frankenstein

The book was originally conceived to contain fifty full-page illustrations, but to maintain a balance between the text & the images, the final selection had to be limited to forty-three. The present collection of six plates, all featuring the Monster, will not appear in the final book. The folder for this, the last of the three Frankenstein portfolios, has been specially designed to contain the complete collection.

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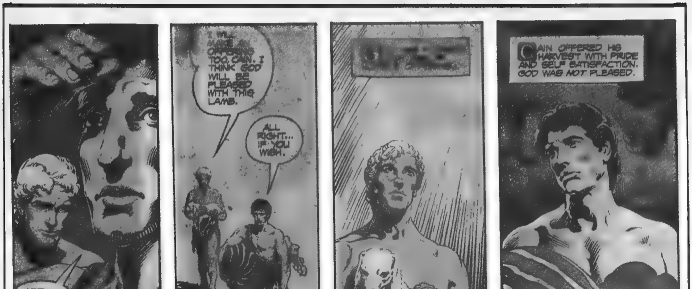

ABEL... MY HARVEST HAS BEEN RICH.
I'M GOING TO OFFER SOME OF IT TO GOD IN THANKS.
I WILL MAKE AN OFFERING TOO, CAIN. I THINK GOD WILL BE PLEASED WITH THIS LAMB.
ALL RIGHT... IF YOU WISH.
CAIN OFFERED HIS HARVEST WITH PRIDE AND SELF SATISFACTION. GOD WAS NOT PLEASED

Sheldon Mayer's God is more pleased with a humble sacrifice than a prideful one Excerpted from **Stories From the Bible (Limited Collector's Edition** vol. 4 no C-36) Layouts by Joe Kubert, finished art by Nestor Redondo © 1975 National Periodical Publications.

picts Eve, baby Abel is arms, leading a flock of sheep toward the garden spot where Adam toils with young Cain. Two enormous oxen stand beside the man and boy. In the next panel, as Eve pours water into Adam's cup, Cain is roughly pushing Abel away from the pile of stones he has collected.]

Eve: *Our sons are so different, Adam. Cain is strong . . . impulsive, while Abel is slender . . . gentle.*

Adam: *Yes . . .*

Caption: *Cain and Abel grew to manhood. Abel became a shepherd . . . tending the flock. Cain worked in the field . . . more fiercely than any yoked ox.*

Cain: *Abel . . . my harvest has been rich. I'm going to offer some of it to God . . . in thanks.*

Abel: *I will make an offering too, Cain. I think God will be pleased with this lamb.*

Cain: *All right . . . if you wish.*

Caption: *God was pleased with Abel's humble offering . . . Cain offered his harvest with pride and self satisfaction. God was not please. [Again the pictures add immeasurably to the telling of the story: Abel, holding the lamb, looks upward as a nimbus of light descends upon him from above. Cain, his arms full of melons and fruit, tips his head sadly and bitterly to the side as storm clouds roll up behind him.]*

There are no simple answers offered here: Sheldon Mayer manages to remain true to the letter of the Bible while drawing his own conclusions about what it is that pleases God. The analogy between Cain and the oxen, masterfully set forth in the illustration of the first panel before it appears in the text of the third, adds another dimension to the narrative: the widely accepted occult belief that the story of Cain and Abel is a "coded" teaching about the precession of the equinox from Taurus (the Bull) to Aries (the Ram), an event which occured approximately 4,000 years ago. Whether or not Mayer had this secondary level of meaning in mind when he wrote his script, the fact that it is there allows the informed reader to enjoy the story more fully. The real point of Mayer's characterization of Cain and Abel, though, is to show that God prefers gentleness and peace to impulsiveness and shows of strength. Cain's pride, an outgrowth of his vigor and his mastery over circumstances, is the reason for his downfall. There is a moralizing component to the concept: Abel, herding sheep like his mother Eve, is gentle and loving. Cain, wresting fruits from the torn breast of the Earth like his father Adam, is impulsive and uncaring. What God wants, or so Mayer seems to be saying, is men and women of peace, humble people.

This moralizing strain has always been a part of America's popular culture, and the DC line of comics has always been a strong champion of "Truth, Justice and the American Way." From the very beginning Gardner Fox, Sheldon Mayer, Bob Kanigher, Charles Moulton Marston and most of the other "Old guard" at DC devoted many scripts to lessons in racial tolerance, kindness to the unfortunate, the need for compassion, and other high ideals. Another typical DC theme, that "fate" is often needlessly cruel but human love is a powerful force for good, is also subtly woven into Mayer's treatment of the "fickleness" of God. It is as if Mayer, the only one of the three Bible comic scripters who can truly accept what fate has in store, has no need to rewrite the Bible to make Good seem "fair" to himself or his readers. What this says about God is unimportant. What it says about Sheldon Mayer, as a man and a writer, is deeply moving.

The story of Cain and Abel doesn't end with Cain's rejection by God, of course. As quoted above from the King James translation of the Bible, Cain talks with Abel and kills him in a field. What they talk about is not recorded, and it is not made clear in any concordance I have seen whether the word "field" refers to the place where Cain was raising crops (did Abel's sheep break in and eat his vegetables?) or the place where Abel was pasturing his flock (did Cain sneak up upon him unawares while he was listening to the bleating of the lambs?). In lieu of more specifics from the Bible, the comic book scripters have had to improvise, but one thing they cannot avoid: Cain kills Abel deader'n a door nail. And comic books are read by children! Mercy me!

The EC version runs like this:

Caption: *Later*

Abel: *Cain! Don't feel so badly!*

Cain: *Come into the field with me! I*

must see you alone!

Abel: Yes, Cain! Now?

Cain: Now! Let us go at once!

Caption: They came to a field and suddenly Cain attacked and killed Abel. [The picture shows him strangling Abel with his left arm while bashing his head in with a rock held in his right hand. There is a really savage look on his face and Abel is open-mouthed in terror.]

Cain: You are God's favorite! For that I hate you!

No pulling of punches here. The awkward dialogue which passes for the two men "talking," as per the Bible's statement, does nothing to explain Cain's motivation, but one thing is made absolutely clear: he does kill his brother.

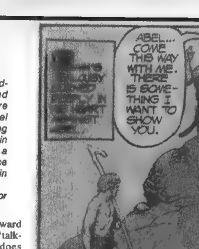
The extirpation of violence from comic books which followed hard upon the heels of Fredric Wertham's charges that reading comics leads to juvenile delinquency has nowhere been more ludicrous than in the adaptations of "classic" novels and folk tales which contained violent passages (and never were thought to cause juvenile delinquency) long before such fare was considered too tough for children to digest. The Bible is a bloody book. One gets the impression that Iva Hoth, the David Cook scripter, wishes it weren't, but he must make do. Resorting to a strict policy of off-panel violence, his murder scene is played like this:

Cain: I gave God as much as he did! I'll get even! [The picture shows Cain frowning and lurking in the foreground as Abel comes up unawares, baby lamb in hand and sheep all around him. The land is rocky and wild, but a caption further into the text (part of a flashback) describes it as "a lonely pasture".]

Cain: At last — we're alone! This is my chance! [He is sneaking up on Abel, club in hand. Abel doesn't notice — he is playing with the baby lamb.]

Cain: No one saw me kill him, but I'm scared! [a closeup of the terrified Cain, turning toward the viewer. There is a lamb in the background. No corpus delecti.]

As Cain so rightly observes, no one saw him kill his brother, not even the reader. The question of violence as fit subject matter for children aside, this is just bad *comics*. Hoth's script (or the editors at Cook) have imposed a terribly crippling set of limitations on Le Blanc's art. It must be understood that Le Blanc is a very adept storyteller, not the ignoramus at breakdowns this example would lead one to believe he is. His early works, like *Intellectual Amos*, *Spy Smasher*, *Pito* and his two *Spirit* stories for Will Eisner, certainly show him to be a better than average artist with an intelligent, if not brilliant, approach to layout. His later syndicated strip work (he has ghosted everything from *Flash Gordon* to *Rex*



Cain lures Abel beyond the sight of their mother and father to commit the first murder From DC's **The Bible** © 1975 National Periodical Publications.

Morgan, MD) is equally creditable, within the slightly more restrictive bounds set by the newspaper comic format. His rendering on *The Picture Bible* itself is both excellent and uniform in quality throughout the sixteen year run, the only flaw being a rather heavy reliance on head and mid-range shots. There is a great deal of emphasis placed upon accuracy in depicting the clothing, housing and customs of the period — several supplementary chapters deal with this material in an educational way — and Le Blanc's "illustrator"-based approach brings true individuality to his portrayals of the major protagonists. But it's a losing battle. The injunction to show no violence, no deaths, no corpses puts a tremendous strain on Le Blanc's credibility as a cartoonist. One almost feels one must apologize for his violation of the principles of sequential narrative. The few times a violent act is shown (the slave driver hitting a Hebrew slave and Moses felling him in turn), the action flows as well as in any other comic. But when David throws his stone at Goliath and we are only *told* that it strikes him on the forehead, the sense of frustration to the reader becomes almost too much to bear.

Hoth's interpretation of the events leading up to the killing doesn't help matters much either. The two men do not "talk", as the Bible (and EC) tell us they do. This serves to make Cain's behavior even more inexplicable, and therefore reprehensible, than it is already. Furthermore, Hoth tells us that Cain is "scared" after he kills Abel. This is a sort of cliff-hanger ending to that week's installment, and the next four-page chapter re-iterates the idea: "Suddenly the killer is afraid. Did someone see him? Who?" It must be understood that nowhere in the Bible itself is it ever stated that Cain is afraid. Even when God confronts him with his crime, he simply speaks with the Lord as if man to man. But in Hoth's version, Cain is "terrified" when God confronts him. There is a propaganda-like flavor to these passages. They smack of the hell-fire and brimstone approach to morality which characterizes all of the less thoughtful Christian denominations. I am reminded of a sign i saw scrawled on the wall of a deserted storefront in the almost-abandoned town of Moody, Missouri, firmly placed in what is known as "the Bible belt." "God knows who you are," the message read, "and He knows what you DID!" Spiritual paranoia is a heady weapon in the hands of the priestly classes. But in order to work effectively, the fear must be instilled in subjects at an early age. Sunday school is a good place to begin.

Against this negative form of spirituality, Sheldon Mayer's script again stands as a shining example of humanism and thoughtful insight into the lives of the tale's protagonists:

Caption: Cain's jealousy burned deeply in his heart against Abel.

Cain: Abel . . . Come this way with me. There is something I want to show you. [The picture sets the scene to follow very well: Abel is holding his shepherd's crook in his hand. Cain is carrying a heavy stone mattock. These tools serve to identify the brothers at a glance and also provide a strong undercurrent of realism in what is to come.]

Caption: Beyond the sight of their mother and father, Cain struck Abel a mortal blow in a fit of rage. Thus occured the first murder. . .to be executed again and again through man's bloody history upon this earth. [Cain is shown felling Abel with the mattock on a stretch of newly dug ground. In the next panel, an overhead shot, Cain strides away from Abel's body, weapon-tool in hand. His long shadow falls back upon his brother's corpse.]

Cain: No longer will the Lord look upon you with pleasure, Abel. You . . . are no more!

Mayer is not merely telling the story here, he is trying to make a moral point and also delve into the first murderer's dawning comprehension of his deed. "You . . .are no more," says Cain, having no word in his vocabulary for death. And indeed, he knows no fear, for he only vaguely understands what he has done. The enormous tragedy his act portends for all of humanity is Mayer's greatest concern, however, and he goes out of his way to make a sober moralizing statement about "man's bloody history upon this earth." The moral, a continuation of Mayer's earlier implication that God favors gentle, humble people over strong, proud ones, is given with the sort of sad finality that DC has always used in its war stories and tales of racial prejudice. It is as if the author seeks to engage the reader in a dialogue: "We know, you and I, how tragic fate can be and how unjust our fellows often are. But you, you understand — you are not one of the ignorant or evil ones of this earth. You share my sorrow at this needless pain, don't you?" And the reader willingly replies, "Yes, I see what hate and bigotry can do. But I'm not one of those — I try to live a just life, to do what's 'right.'" There are many comics fans, adults now, who

credit DC's moralizing stories with awakening them to humanitarian concerns. Let me quote from a letter written to me by Jerry Bails, after I had told him how my daughter was encountering ethnic prejudice at school:

"When I was [young] I was sure it was my generation that would put an end to such stupid inhumanity. I guess I've always been impressed by Gar Fox's tale in *All Star* no. 22, "The Test of Time," in which Dr. Mid-nite rescued a Jewish boy from a gang of bullies, and the JSA members were so moved by the problem (the story was written just after the race riots in Detroit in 1943) that the Conscience of the Universe granted the JSA the gift of time travel, so each could learn how to overcome the prejudice of a past age."

What Fox and Mayer, and the other DC "old guard" scripters have always tried to do, from the earliest days right down to their most recent work, is unabashed and evident. They want to instill a sense of *conscience* in their readers. Fox is utterly above-board about his intentions — the JSA actually encounter the so-called "Conscience of the Universe."

Mayer, on the other hand, is far more subtle (in this story at least) and merely calls the reader's attention to the terrible consequences attendent upon the first murder ever committed. Yet one cannot fail to draw the desired conclusion: the just are ruled by their consciences, not by blind emotion. Contrast this philosophy with the Cook comic's attempt to instill spiritual paranoia in the reader and suddenly, one seemingly trivial fact takes on a new significance: Iva Hoth is a Christian . . . and Shelly Mayer is a Jew. And if there is one thing which exemplifies the differences between the two religions, it is the contrast between the Jewish belief in the spiritual efficacy of good works and following God's laws and the Christian belief that all humanity is damned and must fear eternal torment unless redeemed by Christ's grace. The two faiths share a body of texts — the Old Testament — but their interpretations of these books are as much at variance as the philosophies underlying their metaphysical beliefs. There *are* Christian sects which seek to apply a somewhat "Jewish" outlook to life, but they are in the minority among the mass of Protestant churches. It is quite evident that the pan-denominational group behind the Cook Bible comic isn't one of them.

It is not my intent to take a philosophical stand here myself, although it is probably obvious that my own personal sentiments lie far closer to Mayer's than to Hoth's. Rather, I would prefer to merely allow the above analysis of these comic book adaptations to demonstrate how easy it is for a scripter to inject individual vision and belief into a rigidly standardized story known to millions. Mulford and Hoth's ungainly tampering with the story of Cain and Abel is not only unwarranted, it is completely unexpected since they are, after all, supposedly firm believers in the doctrine that the Bible is the Word of God. Ironically, Mayer, who adheres most faithfully to the letter and the spirit of the Book, goes to extraordinary pains to cast its claimed "devine inspiration" into doubt! He does this by embedding his entire Bible adaptation in a framing sequence in which a devout little girl and her skeptical brother ask their grandfather if the Bible — if God Himself! — are real or "fairy tales". The old man's answer is not calculated to still the doubts of any budding agnostics in the audience. Replying to his grandson's attempt to explain creation in purely scientific terms, he says:

Well, David . . .scientists would be the first to tell you that they don't have all the answers! Sure . . .they'll tell you that life probably began in the sea! But — if it did — how'd it get there? All the different forms of life . . .how'd *they* get there?

You can feel the thrill of life when a herd of wild stallions pounds across hard-packed turf between high, flat-topped mesas! But . . .who *put* 'em there? And what controls the delicate balance of nature? allowing great, lumbering beasts to live alongside feathered, fragile beauty!

From the very beginning, the story was told and retold by one person to another . . .then written down by many people in different languages! It's a story that will always be told . . .as long as there are people to tell it! And now . . .I'll tell it to *you* . . .

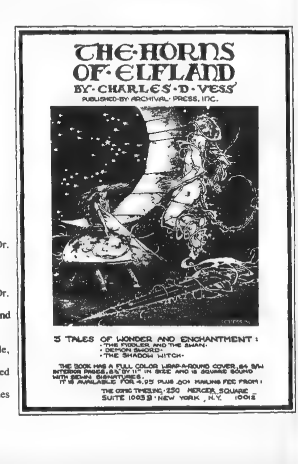
"A story." Nothing more. A story designed to explain the unexplainable fact that life exists. story designed to teach right living to humanity. Mayer claims nothing, but delivers the best that the Bible can produce.

The others may have made their offerings first, or made them more complete — but will God be pleased with their prideful embellishments and emendations . . .or will he look instead with favor on Mayer's humble gift? If I were God, i know which *I* would choose. ■

(continued from page 17)

ANSWERS

1. The Antelope
2. The Lusitania
3. The Fuwalda
4. The Venture
5. The Answer
6. The Posiedon
7. The Argo
8. The H.M.S. Bellerophon
9. The Mongolia
10. The H.M.S. Renown
11. This was the derelict vessel used in *The Cremation of Sam McGee* by Robert W. Service.
12. This was the sailing ship that carried Dracula and his coffins to the shores of England.
13. Boat owned by two time Nobel prize winner and director of the U.N. Starcore project, Dr. Peter Corbeau.
14. Captain Huffenpuff sailed this tub on *The Adventures of Beany and Cecil*. **(Remember them?)**
15. This ship was the focus of one of Sherlock Holmes' first cases, even before he met Dr. Watson.
16. This was the ship that Dr. Doolittle traveled on to see such things as the **Pushmi-Pullyu** and the Glass Sea Snail.
17. This ship was trapped in the jungle and terrorized by the Creature from the Black Lagoon.
18. Captain Ahab, Queequeq, and Ishmael all sailed on this ship after the great white whale, Moby Dick.
19. In *Reap The Wild Wind* John Wayne wrecked this ship for Raymond Massey and then tried to salvage it with Ray Milland. (Love that octopus!)
20. Captain Flint was at the helm as this ship sailed to Treasure Island along with Billy Bones and Long John Silver.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KALUTA: I was sitting in the Library restaurant which is my local bar/restaurant, sketching in this sketchbook [He taps the worn leather sketchbook in front of him] and I saw these two ladies come in. They sat at a table where I could see what they were doing. They were looking through a bunch of science-fiction magazines. I said to myself, "I've never done this before, but I'm going to go over and ask them if they're science-fiction fans." And I did. They said they were fans, yes, but what they were doing was writing a science-fiction play. The two women were Elaine Lee and Susan Lee, two sisters. They wrote the play, along with Dale Place.

SR: *When did you start working on this?*

KALUTA: I started working on it in January *[1980]*. I went to see one of their productions, a thing called *The Contamination Of The Kokomo Lounge*. The Kokomo Lounge is a real roadhouse/bar in Freeport, Texas, down the avenue from a Dow Chemical plant. They reconstructed the whole bar and they had this play happening. It was absolutely terrific. I was immensely impressed, not only because of the acting, but by the fact that Elaine and Susan had written it, too. So, I said that "These are good people. They deserve my best."

I started thinking about doing the poster and then I read the script. Oh God, I was amazed at how many genres she was actually poking fun at, without being a dyed-in-the-wool science-fiction fan. She was poking fun at Andre Norton, she was poking fun at everybody, all the Doc Smith stuff, without ever having read Doc Smith. I started thinking about what to do with the poster. Should it be like a real 1930's movie poster? That's when I realized I wanted to do characterizations of the entire cast on the poster. But, I had to know what they looked like. So that's when I started designing the costumes. Because I designed them so intricately, I had to build them. And that's when my house started to look like the garment district.

SR: *What were the special challenges you encountered doing theatrical designing for the first time?*

KALUTA: Well a drawing is a two-dimesional illusion representing a three dumentional subject. The thing was to make this two-dimentional illusion into a real three dimension thing with what you have on hand, without the budget that Hollywood, or Broadway, or even Off-Broadway would have. You had to go out and buy things, knowing that the only seamstress was Elaine Lee.

SR: *Do you think you want to do more theatrical designing?*

KALUTA: Sure, and I might, too. The Wild Hair people who wrote *Starstruck*, included me in their negotiations because they want me to be their designer...for wherever *Starstruck* goes. They're shooting for Off-Broadway, Broadway, road shows and the United Kingdom. They want me to be the designer, which means I'll either join the union or be run in the credits as conceived by Michael Wm. Kaluta and designed by somebody who's in the union.

SR: *Mike, have you ever been approached to do any kind of designs for films, by say George Lucas?*

KALUTA: I got a call from Lucasfilms about two years before *Star Wars* came out and I wasn't around. So, I called back, left my

name with a secretary and that was the last I heard from them. I've been approached to work on *Dune*, that Dino de Laurentiis owns the rights to, and he apparently had Ridley Scott on the docket for director. If Ridley Scott's the director and they want me to work for them, I will. But Ridley Scott won't work on it, if Dino de Laurentiis has anything to do with the design of the film and that's just the way I want it.

SR: *What kind of effect did the drug culture and hallucinogens have on your artwork, if any?*

KALUTA: Basically they let me know what were the questions that I had about myself and they put me in the middle of the screaming maelstrom of my mind, having to ask questions like: Why are we here? What are we doing in this? Does anybody really know? All that stuff that people like *[Robert]* Crumb made into such good jokes came out then. I had to come up with answers and I came up with answers out of my environment. Luckily, I was with a bunch of people, none of which were wasted, burned-out people. They were all creative people, using their minds. I guess the stuff was used to accentuate what they were into and not because they were jaded.

SR: *Do you find yourself more stimulated by creative people, other artists?*

KALUTA: Absolutely, absolutely.

SR: *Do you seek out dancers and actors and other creative types?*

KALUTA: I never actually seek out anything with a drive. Like Charles *[Vess, Kaluta's roommate]* if he wants something, he goes out and finds where it's happening and what it's doing. Myself, I sort of sit and wait for it to materialize, because it always does. So there'll be times like right now, when I'm completely immersed in total creativity with all these people. They're all geniuses, as far as I'm concerned; the way they do the things that they're into and the way they put words together or take words and make it into a character. It's magnificent, just being there, because my mind's just shooting way up.

SR: *Do you find it feeds your own creativity?*

KALUTA: Absolutely. Second guessing one of the mundane Shadow scripts is one prod to my creativity. But to second-guess from genius level thinking, that's an incredible rush. [pause] Of course, second-guessing is the easiest thing in the world. Once somebody has something, the only thing you can do is run with it.

SR: *Do you choose your own subject matter when you're doing a portfolio?*

KALUTA: Generally. Yes, I do.

SR: *How do you select your subjects? Is it whatever you feel like doing, or what you think is saleable at the time?*

KALUTA: Basically it's what I feel like doing because when I'm doing portfolios, it's for a limited audience, my fan audience, people who get into the stuff I do. So I know that whoever's marketing the thing will be able to sell at least half of what they've got immediately and the rest of it will go to people whose interest may be for that type of stuff, fantasy oriented things. So the portfolios actually go out to the real world and are bought by people who don't know anything about comics or the whole comics-fantasy-science fiction subculture, but who just happen to like what the pictures are.

SR: *I remember seeing some sketches from a* Metropolis *book that you're supposed to be working on. What's the status of that?*

KALUTA: It's hanging in limbo. I was supposed to be doing it for Dragon's Dream to be a profusely illustrated book, à la 1930's type stuff. It wasn't going to be comics.

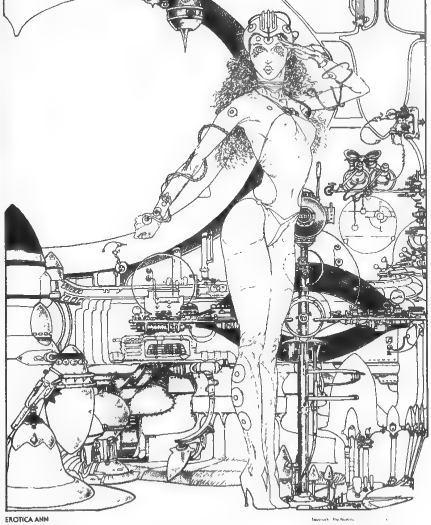
SR: *How much work have you actually done on it?*

KALUTA: Preparatory sketches. One big drawing of the face. It took me four months to work out what the face of the robot should look like, because I'm fighting a master. Whoever Fritz Lang got to design that robot in the movie, just designed *the* robot. There hasn't been a robot since that beats it. Looking at the 20s and 30s vision of the future, that robot is the best. There'll never be a better one.

SR: *Have you ever taken your stuff into the major slicks such as* Playboy *or* Penthouse *to get any illustration work?*

KALUTA: No. I got a call from *Playboy* once, when they were gettin ready to do their new comics section. It was $200 a page, or something like that, but they kept the originals. I told them, "no," because I like to keep my originals. I don't like working on something that I know I can't own.

I have a hard time even when I get a personal commission. When I need money,



EROTICA AHH

Starstruck was performed at the Network Theater in New York City, with costumes and set design by Mike Kaluta. Above is a sample from the *Starstruck* portfolio also done by Mike

someone says: "Will you do a portrait of my wife?" I'll say yes and then it will take a year and a half to do it. By the time it's finished it's usually worth way beyond the price they've offered in terms of the time I spent doing it. Of course, morally I have to settle for the price we originally agreed upon. But, it takes a long time for them to get the portrait and I always tell myself never again, never again.

SR: *Do you have a deal with DC comics where you keep the covers?*

KALUTA: Oh yeah. It's such a racket, too. I've gotten back everything I've done for them except *Carson of Venus*, which apparently, most of it is out with the ERB people in Tarzana. I got one issue of *Carson of Venus* back, one of my favorites too. I'm lucky to have that one whole story back. I don't have the first issue of the Shadow, which I think Alan Kupperberg has.

SR: *How did he get it?*

KALUTA: I think he stole it from D.C. Every time I've faced him with it, he's been real evasive. He's never said, "No, I don't have it." So, I think he still has it. I'm putting it in print, now. This is just to shake him up.

SR: *All right Alan Kupperberg, your number's up.*

KALUTA: If you've got it, I'd like it back.

SR: *Do you just do covers for DC when you need a little bread?*

KALUTA: That and sometimes I'll get a little carried away, like with *Time Warp*. *Time Warp* has folded now, but I must have done at least ten covers for them. I also went nuts with *Doorway Into Nightmare*. There's one they haven't put out yet, but it's perhaps one of the best.

SR: *So, you probably won't be doing any kind of strips in the future then? You're just going to stick with single illustrations and paintings . . .?*

KALUTA: Well, if I do strips, it'll be fairytale stuff for *Epic*.

SR: *How long did the* Dante's Inferno *portfolios take you?*

KALUTA: It took me a matter of weeks to do all the plates, actually. One or two, like Geyron, the thing with wings, I worked on for a long time. But, my favorite one, *Paolo and Francesca* which is the two flying lovers, looks kind of *[William]* Blakey. That one was the quickest and most successful. Charon was very successful, with the boat and all that stuff. . . All those pieces could be more finished, I don't mean in rendering and detail, but in putting in the rest of the stuff that could have gone in. But, I was working under a time thing there, so I took them to a point and stopped. *Roosting Demons* was supposed to go back and back, with the demons getting smaller and smaller. There would just be thousands of them, all mostly hanging around. All the pieces have a feeling that this place is a big place, which I was going for. But, in the drawings, the original drawings for the things, that was actually drawn.

SR: *Now, I understand that you have some form of color blindness?*

KALUTA: Yeah. Red-Green. It's not full color blindness, which means you see grays and browns. But I have trouble with deep hues of red, that look brown, deep hues of green sometimes will even look red. But, it's only when I'm not concentrating. When I'm working on a picture, my mind or eyes or whatever it is, become color saturated and I can tell subleties of color. So, I have no real problems when I'm doing my pieces.

SR: *That sounds like a pretty serious drawback for an artist.*

KALUTA: It would be. I have the feeling, that it's not physiological, but a mental thing, as far as being educated to what color really is, I was bored with color when I was in class, doing color wheels and stuff. I never really learned that way. I learned by doing. I know what I'm doing when I'm painting, when I'm working on a painting and I go outside, I see all the colors I imagine everyone else sees at that point, because my eyes are just so damn attuned to color. Normally of course, I'm not concentration on color, I'm concentrating on form, shape, atmosphere, perspective and things like that.

SR: *What is your personal philosophy about art and how does it manifest itself in what you do?*

KALUTA: The first thing I want to kick the starter motor in the mind of whoever's looking at it, so that they start going off on their own flights of fantasy with the picture. Let it tell a story. I always put more into a picture than necessarily has to be there for the emotional impact, so that six months later (they don't even have to have the picture hanging), they'll see something pop out of the picture that changes the whole concept of the thing for them.

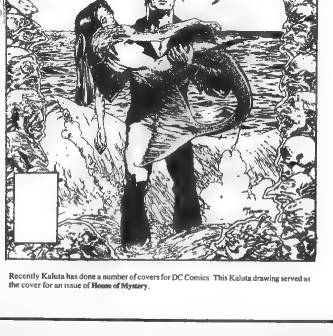
I like to create mood and atmosphere. I love to pull a heartstring if I can. And I think of one that really does that, of all the pieces that I've done is: *The Fate Of Dollies Lost In Dreams*, with the doll falling off the bed. That one, I know, does pull a heartstring, especially with women, because they have had dreams like that.

SR: *I think that would touch the people who are still kids inside, especially somebody with a strong imagination. Some people let the child inside die.*

KALUTA: For sure. Well, I haven't. I'm a real fan of my own work, which causes the collectors some hassles. Because I have the feeling there's a line of people who want to buy *Ayesha, The Sacrifice, Why He Doesn't Sleep At Night?* Never for enough money that I would even consider it, only because I love the pieces. If they were just another piece, if I was just turning the stuff out, sure I'd sell it. But each one of those things has changed my life, just in the way I did it. The fact that each work came out of me, often without me being aware of being in control myself. I didn't control the outcome of the thing after a certain point and it took over, made me do things.

SR: *Do you reach a point where the characters are talking to you?*

KALUTA: The characters or the piece itself. The emotion or the atmosphere of the piece will talk to me and tell me, "Forget what you were planning to do with this thing, it's going in a different direction." And when that happens, that's when I start getting paid for the piece. No money in it whatsoever, it's just in that thrill. It's not the finished piece and what people say about it that's the reward. The re-



Recently Kaluta has done a number of covers for DC Comics This Kaluta drawing served as the cover for an issue of House of Mystery.

THEY LEFT
THE CITY OF
THIEVES
MW
BROWN
1975

ward is in doing. Doing art is very lonely. You're there by yourself doing it and when the old Alpha waves get going, it's you and the piece in communication, or communion as it were. That's what art's about: thrills, like skydiving. All of a sudden you're completly in another world doing something and its doing you. That's what I wait for, look for and hope for when I'm working on a piece.

One piece called *Solo*, came out exactly like I wanted it to, and the piece bored the hell out of me. It took me about two years for that piece to really start meaning something to me, because it came out like I expected it would, so I saw nothing remarkable in that. It was only through feedback from other people, talking about how much they liked it, what it meant to them, for it to affect me.

SR: *When you start on a piece, do you reach a point before you sit down drawing where you see what's going to be on the paper?*

KALUTA: Rarely. I've done two drawing that I like *[that]* were exactly like I had in my mind and both are pencil drawings. One's a drawing of Lamont Cranston and Margo Lane and the other is a picture of two people making love. They both went through changes in the work, but still, they were changes *[that]* I was actually affecting with my conscious mind. The subconscious had very little to do with that. The subconscious worked before in assembling all the imagery that's in the picture. When I did it, I was in control.

Why He Doesn't Sleep at Night? completely took me over. *The Fate of Dollies Lost in Dreams* completely took me over. I knew that they each had to be a certain way. But, I didn't say, when I first came up with the initial idea: "Oh, I'm going to put wheels on the bottom of the bed." I had to put little castors because I used to crawl under beds when I was a kid and I know what it looks like underneath there. That's one of the major compliments Hickman and Trumbo gave me on the piece: "It looks like the underside of a bed!" Yeah, of course. It has to. But, I didn't go look under a bed, I looked under a bed when I was ten years old.

SR: *Do you work with one controlling metaphor or feeling, or does your approach change from piece to piece, depending on how it feels?*

KALUTA: Oh, it changes completly from piece to piece. I'd done *The Sacrifice* and then, the mermaids piece. And the next piece that I was to do was *Why He Doesn't Sleep At Night?* And I was working toward that, sketching and sketching, and it wasn't ready, it was still half-baked. So, I was waiting outside for the postman to deliver the *Behind Neptune's Throne* prints from Christopher Enterprises and I did a little sketch of a girl sitting on a sundial, holding wings, and I named it *Icarus Had A Sister*. It was just a sketch. Then, in between those two pieces I was talking about, I said, "That could be a poster." It came out in two weeks. And it came out full blown, just like it was, Bam! I had no problem whatsoever. It was meant to be. Because then, when I started on *Why He Doesn't Sleep At Night?*, I was gone. It just happened.

SR: *The Europeans, particularly the French and Italians, have a much greater respect for comics as an art form. What kind of reception has your work received over in Europe?*

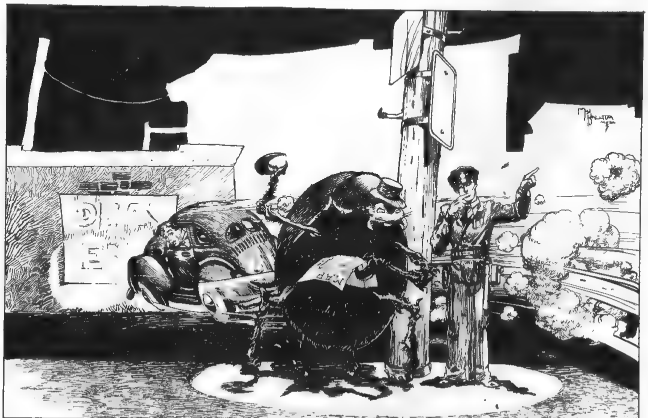
KALUTA: They love my work. They love Berni's. They love Jeff's. It's received with acclaim and looked on as the art form it is. I mean anything can be an art form. But, it's respected. Then again, it's respected here as well, it's just that the people who respect it here aren't in the positions to get it into the Metropolitan Museum, like people over there can get comics into the Louvre.

SR: *Have you been to any cons in Europe?*

KALUTA: Yes, a couple. In England and this past fall, Berni, Jeff and myself went on a publicity tour for the Studio. We toured about 12 European cities, met with fans in bookstores and stuff like that.

SR: *What are the big differences between European fans and the ones you've met at American cons?*

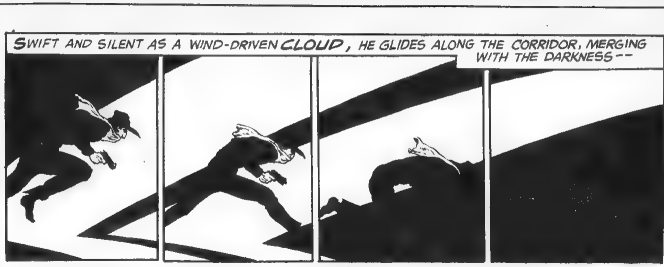
KALUTA: Not a single one. Except that they all had very, very, pretty girlfriends. See, over here, you got one guy that has a very pretty girlfriend and then the rest of the guys are just kind of standing there drooling saliva. But over there, everybody has a very pretty



A little touch of Mike Kaluta humor

© 1981 Michael Kaluta

AN AGONIZED GROAN BURST FROM HIS VICTIM'S LIPS



The Shadow is a creature of darkness who fights crime, but is not good or evil himself! From *The Shadow* #3.

© 1981 DC Comics

girlfriend.

SR: *I can sense a definite love for the feminine form in your work. Do you ever work with live models?*

KALUTA: Very rarely.

SR: *Why is that?*

KALUTA: Once I have the idea, I can never get it together to go and find someone that fits the idea. I do, however, get ideas from watching friends of mine or women that I know and will try to incorporate them into the piece that I have thought of. And a couple of pictures I've worked on were commissioned portraits by various husbands of their wives.

SR: *Were they oils?*

KALUTA: One will be, but the other one is in the *Children Of The Twilight* portfolio, the piece entitled *Children Of The Twilight*, the jaguar-like lady with the snake wrapped around her is the portrait of Carol McVey. And it was a commissioned piece.

SR: *How do you manage to get the chameleon quality in your artwork? What I'm referring to is, when you're doing heroic fantasy in the mold of Frazetta and Krenkel, it's fantasy. But, when you do something 30s, its 30's pulp illustration and art deco.*

KALUTA: I run into a lot of problems with that, as far as taking my work into a new account. I'll go into Ace books with all my posters and my *Swords of Sharazar* book. What I'm doing is I'm showing them the work of six people. You have Baroque fantasy, you have light fantasy, you've got the 30's stuff, you have *Swords of Sharazar* (whatever genre that falls into), and a few other things, science-fiction and so on. Each one looks like a different guy did it, so they can't use me. They don't see a definitive style. The definitive style is in the fact that each one has an atmosphere. That's what links them together.

When I work on a fantasy thing, it's fantasy. I try to get the feeling of fantasy in the line and everything. When I go for Sci-Fi, there's a certain way it's gotta look so it's science fiction. If you look through *Epic* and *Heavy Metal*, you'll see guys who don't know what they're doing, as far as drawing science-fiction. The Spanish guys working for Warren, doing science-fiction didn't change their style to suit the stylistic necessities of that genre. I change myself. First of all, I'm entertained by what I'm doing. I'm drawing for myself and my friends. It's got to look that way.

CHARLES VESS: It's the quality of the imagination and not the way it's drawn that determines the style.

SR: *That's very good.*

CHARLES VESS: I use that in my class.

SR: *I know you had a gallery show in '77, will you have any in the future?*

KALUTA: We just had *[one]*, Charles, myself, Hickman and a bunch of other people including Boris *[Vallejo]* and John Mays and Michael Whelan. The New Britain Museum of American Art had the show and it's an accredited museum.

SR: *Do you think your work is starting to be taken more seriously now?*

© 1981 DC Comics

A sample of Berni Wrightson and Mike Kaluta working together From *The Shadow* #3.

KALUTA: I think it's always been taken seriously, in a way, by the people who enjoyed it. They know that when they were looking at one of my posters, they're looking at someone that's dedicated to whatever's in the poster. As opposed to a big pin-up of Superman, which is just a big pin-up of Superman.

SR: *Have you ever considered doing gallery work for sale, or do you want to stick with illustration the way you're doing now?*

KALUTA: Well, the illustration I do has the potential of ending up in a gallery because it's more personal than merely gilding someone's words. I'm talking about things like *Why He Doesn't Sleep At Night?* They're personal statements that I just had to get out. So they're a statement by an artist, which is what art may be. So there's a possibility of it being real art, I don't know. But, that's not for me to say, that's for the future to figure out. I'm just having a good time. I'm not snobby about the things I do. I don't go around saying "You must understand that this is not what you think it is, it's da-da-da-da-da-da." No. I had fun and if something's in it and someone sees it, they're certainly welcome to. If they get what I got, or what I put in, that's flattering and fine, but, if they get whatever they think is in there and it's not, it doesn't bother me any.

SR: *I wanted to ask you about Why He Doesn't Sleep At Night?*; it's most unlike your other work, it's fragmented, nightmarish, almost surreal in its intensity.

KALUTA: It's the first of the poster pictures I did that actually went beyond the stuff that I'd done before. And I still consider it my masterpiece, if you will. Because everything came together. The title came out of drawing the picture. I knew what I wanted, so I was going for it. Originally, it was going to look like just a fantasy illustration, a reality thing with a child's bedroom and the kid sitting up in bed and a women's shape in the window with large, glowing eyes and monstrous insects stuck all over the window. It's basically a wet dream. A kid doesn't understand what sex is about when he's the age of the kid in the picture. He knows that something is happening, but he doesn't understand it in the slightest. He has all these peculiar visions that

AFZAL KHAN
ROARED...
M. C. Galliuta

are going on in his head. He doesn't understand any of it, even the mechanics of what is eventually going to happen to him. So that's basically what I was trying to get across in the picture.

SR: *How much of your own sexuality do you put into your work?*

KALUTA: All of it. Yeah, it's one compliment that I've gotten from people that I'm actually very flattered by when they can see it. That the pictures, no matter what they are, are very sensual.

SR: *Do you see any great aesthetic gulf between the type of art you prefer to draw and the so-called fine arts?*

KALUTA: Yes, there's an aesthetic gulf. My stuff is real anachronistic because it's based on the turn of the century, it's based on the '20's and '30's approach to illustration, movies, TV that I grew up with, science-fiction and fantasy that I've read and so forth. So, yes. There's a gulf because I'm drawing from other sources that have nothing to do with modern art.

SR: *What's your opinion of modern art, people like Jackson Pollock, Andy Warhol?*

KALUTA: Well actually, they're both passé as far as modern art goes. But, I know what you're trying to say. I personally think that Andy Warhol is an entertainer, not an artist. He is a very good entertainer. He scandalizes people and that entertains them. I don't know if he's doing art. That's for the future to figure out, if his stuff's still hanging in museums in 2145, or whatever, then you know he was an artist. But, you can't tell now because he's still living. Society catches up with whatever is happening in the art world about 20 years after it happens. Ten, twenty years after it happens, then it becomes real popular with the workaday people instead of the elite. The step after that, is, you stop being a cult figure and you die and your stuff is decided to be real art, or just a passing fancy, something that was dealing with society at the time.

SR: *What do you feel is the artist's role in society?*

KALUTA: You can answer it a dozen ways.

SR: *How do you answer it for yourself?*

KALUTA: Communication. Interpretation of ideas and emotions and entertainment. I think that these days, art, in a fine art sense, is entertaining people. Because it's not religious. Like most of the great art of years past was based on the Catholic religion. Every artist worked for the church, or he didn't work. Then Van Gogh came along and all the other Sunday painters (which is what they were; people who had to paint), it just happened that they were very good at it. They did things that interpreted what they saw. And fortunately for us, their stuff wasn't completely lost. None of them made a big splash because they weren't pandering to the conventions of society, they were just painting for themselves.

I have a belief that self-dedication, if you have an idea and dedicate yourself to it, that eventually will out. That will come through in the picture. You can tell it about anything. You can tell if an actor never wins an award, never has his name bandied about by the press. But you can tell when he's a dedicated actor because every one of his performances lives. He does it really well because he gets his fulfillment from doing it, not from his paycheck or from the acclaims that comes after it's done, which goes back to one of the answers I gave you.

SR: *What kind of advice would you have to offer the people who want to become illustrators now?*

KALUTA: Okay, basic advice is, especially if they're enamored of comics: Don't try to draw comics, just try to draw. That's all. Draw. Draw everything and anything, all the time. Get into it. Go to the people, that you don't even like, from years and years ago, hundreds of years ago, and study what they did, because you wouldn't hear about them if they weren't geniuses. Study all that stuff. Give yourself that edge, because it's only the people that have that edge that get any note. The reason that Frazetta is so powerful and so all-pervading is because he knows more than drawing comics. The same thing with Krenkel, the same thing with Jones, myself, Wrightson, Barry Smith, Charles and on and on.

All of the Boris' are gonna fade as soon as those books stop being popular. You'll just never see that shit again. He looks like Frazetta. But then again, you'll never see him create an environment on a cover. Whereas Frazetta can put down two people on no background and create an environment. He's created an environment because he believes in what he's doing. Boris just draws himself and his girlfriend or wife, whoever she is, in various silly costumes with various silly weapons that those characters would never carry anyway. Now, I have to recant myself, every once in a while, he comes up with a gem. Especially if it has nothing to do with fantasy. He is a magnificent artist, a magnificent technician, as far as that goes. But, I equate him with the Brothers Hildebrant, as far as their Tolkien stuff goes. They stink. They don't know what Tolkien's all about, it's obvious. It's not Tolkien. There's no feeling of epic.

SR: *Do you think you'll ever want to live in the real, mundane world, as opposed to the fantasy world you've created in your artwork?*

KALUTA: No. ■

From Mike Kaluta's *A Night Falls* (Charles Songs)

© 1981 Michael Kaluta

TODAY'S ARMY WITH DOPIN' DAN IN "SICK" CALL
BY TED RICHARDS
©1979 BY TED RICHARDS
PVT. DOPIN' DAN?
SICK CALL: 0800-1100hrs
RIGHT HERE...
X-RAY
HI, PVT. DAN, I'M DR. KLUTZ — HOW DO YOU FEEL .... ANY "PROBLEMS" YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT?
NO WAY, DOC — I'M JUST PLAIN SICK. MUSCLES ACHE, I FEEL HOT 'N FEVERISH, MY CHEST HURTS...
HMMM, WELL, YOU DO EXHIBIT FLU-LIKE SYMPTOMS - HMM I HEAR SOME LOWER CHEST CONGESTION..
UH, I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, O.K.?
OH-KAY-Y..HMM.. LOWER CONGESTION.. LOWER CONGESTION.. PULMONARY... HMM WHAT DOES PULMONARY DEGENEROSIS MEAN? HMM...HMMM.
FLIP FLIP FLIP
UH, EXCUSE ME COL. CHAINSAW — I HAVE A PATIENT WHO NEEDS A PULMONARY DEGENEROSIS TEST... WHAT DOES THAT MEAN - AND HOW DO I DO - IT?.
AHH — DON'T BOTHER - JUST DO A MEANINGITIS TEST — THAT'S ALL WE'RE WORRIED ABOUT..

NOW THIS IS JUST A LITTLE SPINAL TAP.
WHOOPS! I FORGOT TO SCREW THE NEEDLE IN- I-I'LL BE RIGHT BACK—O.K.?
CRACK
O.K., READY- AGH! NYAH! (WHEW) IT REALLY IS STUCK! WE'LL HAVE TO OPERATE!
THERE! FROM NOW ON, LT. KLUTZ, PUT THE NEEDLE BETWEEN THE SPINAL DISCS—NOT IN THEM!
YES, S-S-S-BUT WE MADE A MISTAKE, SIR...
-THIS PERSON ISN'T PVT. DOPIN' DAN!
WHAT! THEN WHERE IS PVT. DAN?!
PVT. DAN?- HE'S RIGHT HERE! WE JUST PREFORMED AN APPENDECTOMY ON HIM.....
HE'S DOIN' QUITE WELL.
-TWO DAYS LATER-
I HEARD YOU RECOVERED FROM YOUR OPERATION IN A SINGLE DAY! GOOD SOLDIER! THAT'S A RECORD!
YEAH... BUT I STILL GOT TH' FLU!

BLOWTORCH
IV
©'80 m. gumeis
I SAW DARKNESS. THE PITCH BLACKNESS OF A MOVIE THEATER WITH ITS PROJECTOR BROKEN. WAS I BLINDFOLDED? BLINDED?? OH MAY EYES! THEY WERE... CLOSED. I OPENED THEM. THERE WAS SHRIMPY, KEEPING A COUPLE OF PUPILS ON ME. AS IF I COULD ESCAPE - THE CORD AROUND MY WRISTS FELT LIKE A THOUSAND ACUPUNCTURE NEEDLES DANCING A FLAMENCO.
SPANK ME! SPANK ME, DADDY-O!
T-THIS HIS MY SON F-FUNK. HHE'S A PUNK.
PUNK IS DEAD, DEAD, DEAD! I AM NOT A PUNK!
W-WELL... NEW WAVE?
NO WAVE! I MANAGE THE BAND, THE OGRES, SAY, YOU GOT CORN FLAKES? I'M THIRSTY!
HEY!
YOU SUCK.
WHA-?
YOU ARE BENEATH CONTEMPT, MAN! A MINDLESS CLONE. JUMP OFF A CLIFF, CLONE. WHO ARE YOU ANYWAY?
R-RUP! BLOWTORCH.
WELL, I AM GOING TO DO YOU A FAVOR, RUP! BLOWTORCH. I AM GOING TO KILL YOU.
I WASN'T GOING TO LET SOME PSYCHO TALK TO ME THAT WAY. I LASHED OUT WITH MY FOOT TO SEND HIM BACKWARDS. JUST LIKE THE ROUND BUT BRAVE MOVIE HEROES WOULD DO. TOO BAD FUNK DIDN'T SEE THE SAME MOVIES OR ELSE HE WOULDN'T HAVE CAUGHT MY FOOT!
HA!
HA HA HA!
HERE'S YOUR REWARD, FIDO! SPIDERS AND OTHER CRAWLIES! HYAH HYAAHH!! NOW OPEN YOUR MOUTH...
OH.. (CHOKE) ... NO!
THE CREEP WOULDN'T DARE TO POUR THOSE BUGS ON MY FACE IF I WASN'T TIED DOWN! IF I JUST HAD MY HANDS LOOSE, I'D SHOW HIM... IF ONLY I HAD MY HANDS FREE, I'D GET MY CAN OF "RAID"!
NOOOOO!
BLOWTORCH MUST BE (CHUCKLE) HAVING A GOOD TIME! I DON'T GET IT, VOGUE... WHY DIDN'T WE WIPE HIM OUT ALREADY?
ALL IN GOOD TIME, BOUNCER! WE COULD NOT RISK HAVING ANOTHER BODY TIED TO US! WEEPE'S DEATH LOOKED SUSPICIOUS ENOUGH TO THE COPS!
WHO'S THAT?
¡MUCHO GUSTO, SEÑORA!
THIS IS J. HECTOR. HE'S GONNA TAKE US TO A SMALL ISLAND NEAR THE CARIBBEAN. I WITHDREW YOUR LATE HUSBAND'S DOUGH, AND WE'LL BE OFF SOON.
YOU TOOK ALL OF WEEPE'S MONEY? WHY?
IT'S OUR MONEY - NOW, POLL! I FIGGERED THIS WOULD MAKE A TERRIFIC HONEYMOON... AND ONCE YOU SEE THE ISLAND, YOU MAY NEVER LEA... UH, NEVER WANT TO LEAVE!
MEANWHILE...
GUESS WHAT, BOSS! BOUNCER MISSED HIS PAYMENT!
SPUT(E) SPUTTER! WE CAN'T DO THIS! NO ONE MESS THIS TO BIG AL!
THAT PISSES ME OFF.
UH-OH!

of comics at conventions trying to fill in the missing information. And I am in a decent financial —and geographic (New York) location to do such. Yet, most people do not have access to large stockpiles of comics and without that access the "thrill" of the search simply does not exist.

I am mainly concerned with compiling and preserving the history of comics and the careers of their creators — through whatever means available. Publishing indices appear to me to be the best method of accomplishing that goal. Since most people do not have access or the means to acquire that information for themselves, I feel it is up to the people who *do* have that access and means. If we don't do it, the information will not be available to others.

Further, I am not so much concerned about sitting at home and masturbating to the vast collection and lists in my personal space. I would like others to be able to share my information. I am not so pompous to think that I'm simply altruistic, yet if you care more about the preservation and sharing of comics history, then personal concerns such as affordability of certain "collectable" comics should not be your driving motive. I find the person who hordes information which others can use to be selfish, and I question their motives.

While comics that have Williamson or Toth artwork, for example, have risen tremendously in value once the information was disseminated, this rising price has not occured with most other artists. Gene Colan's comics will not, for example, suddenly jump in price if an index is published. Neither will an index to Steve Ditko's mystery and horror stories.

The bottom line, Jim, is that even considering the possibility of rising prices of certain comics, the preservation of the careers of comics creators appears to me to be much more important than any individual having a nice little collection all to him/herself. Think about priorities. What's more important — sitting at home with a comic on one knee, or supplying others with the means to allow them to read their comics one-handed as well?"

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WAAH! I DECIDED TO GET CRUSHED ON ACCOUNT OF I WANTS OLIVE OYL TO BE JEALOUS — SEEMS SHE'S HITCHING HERSELF TO ANOTHER!
WANT'S YOUR NAME?
HE WANTS POPEYE THE SAILOR.
WANT'S & THE YOUNG LADY'S SHE AIN'T NO YOUNG LADY — SHE'S MARRIED! WANT'S HER NAME?
I LIVE 1 WAY
I SAID — WANTS HER NAME?
ILLAFETA ASTER!
ILLAFETA ASTER!
WHERE DOES SHE LIVE?
1934 King Features Syndicate, Inc.
THAT AIN'T HER NAME — I SAID I WILL HAVE TO ASTER
WHAT! YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR WIFE'S NAME!
THAT'S RIGHT — A SEE I ONLY MET'ER YESTERDAY AN I DIDN'T LIKE TO ASK 'ER NAME ON ACCOUNT OF SHE MIGHT THINK I WAS A FLAMELAND SAVVY?
IS SHE WILLING TO MARRY I DON'T ASTER SO, YOU?
NO YOU KNOW HER MOTHER'S NAME?
I DON'T WANT TO MARRY HER MOTHER!
SURELY YOUR PARENTS HAD A CEREMONY WHEN YOU WERE BORN? A REGISTRATION OF WHO BORNED A ORPHAN!
ALL NEVER MIND — I'LL STAY SINGLE
1934 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

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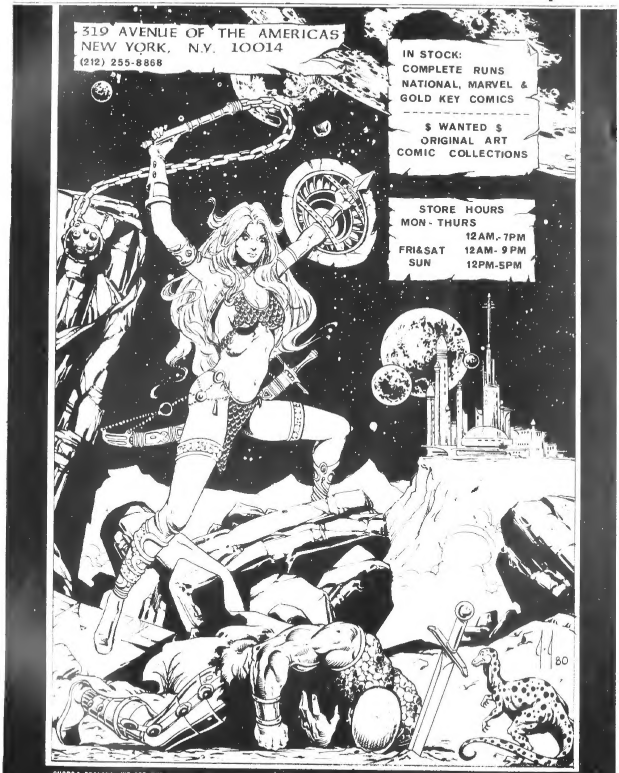

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